

DANISH MASSACRE:

AN HISTORIC FACT.

"Think thou already hear'st the dying Screams
Of harmless Infants:
Think that thou seest their sad distracted Mothers
Kneeling before thy Feet, and begging Pity.

Behold the furious and unpitying Soldier
Pulling his reeking Dagger from the Bosoms
Of gasping Wretches. Death in every Quarter,
With all that sad Disorder can produce,
To make a Spectacle of Horror,"

Orway.

BY THE AUTHOR OF MONMOUTH,

A TALE.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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IN TWO VOLUMES

By Mrs. Anna Maria Mockenzie

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INTRODUCTION.

——— Horror and doubt distract

His troubled thoughts———

——— Now conscience wakes despair

That slumber'd ; wakes the bitter memory

Of what he was, what is, and what must be

Worse ; of worse deeds worse suff'rings must ensue.

MILTON.

IN an interval of peace, which followed that long succession of calamities induced by Danish ambition and English treachery and timidity, one of those unfortunate sufferers, whose family had nearly fallen a prey to the rage of those barbarous times, and whose attachment to his country could

not secure from the heaviest afflictions, retired to the foot of Snowdon, a mountain in the northern part of Wales, where, with the only child of his slaughtered son, he endeavoured to meliorate the quick and pungent sense of past sorrows, by fortifying and improving the mind of young Lewis, and beguiled many tedious moments in an employment suited to the garrulity of age ;—that of indulging himself in tedious descriptions and melancholy remarks upon the misfortunes of his friends and relatives, gratifying at the same time the little boy's curiosity in pathetic representations of those battles in which he had humbled the savage Dane, or rescued the hardy Englishman, (for all were not like their king, weak and cowardly.) —

Sometimes

Sometimes a tear would steal down his venerable cheeks, when speaking of a villainous transaction, which, through the vile influence of Britain's most dangerous enemy, the duke of Mercia, had driven him to seek a refuge among the simple Cambrians, and often a deep and heavy sigh would agitate his ancient frame, while relating the extinction of his brave but unsuccessful offspring. The ruined fortress that once had stood undemolished amidst the various shocks of savage engines, now afforded but a miserable asylum for its lawful owner, and Llewellyn slept among those animals who love the desolated tower and roofless habitation. The melancholy owl avoided not his presence, but, seated above his head, would

hoot in concert with more of her species through the dark and solitary night, nor silenced by her monotonous complaining the sad story of Llewellyn's misery ; for Llewellyn was particularly affected with reciting the filial piety of Lewis's father, who, in defending an honoured parent from the uplifted battle-axe, which his savage general aimed at his head for some trifling opposition to his imperious will, received a decisive stroke. — " Alas, my son," would the sage exclaim, " what a bloody reward for thy unprecedented goodness. Thou defendest the helpless root, while the vigorous branch is lopped from the ancient stem." — In those horrible days of England's mourning, mercy, gentleness, and humanity were banished the

the land. To conquer or die was the warrior's boast ; neither infantine tenderness, feminine delicacy, feeble age, or steady integrity, were exempted from the execrable lot. All by turns became the victor or the vanquished, and he who to-day proudly erected a haughty crest, to-morrow trailed his raven locks in dust, or dragged, perhaps, at the chariot-wheels of more successful ambition, read a forcible, but unavailing lesson to the merciless conqueror, who, rioting in the excess of sanguinary cruelty, feared not a fate which a very few hours might precipitate.—“Now,” and he would sigh, “now, indeed, the dagger no longer becomes an object of terror to the hapless cottager or harmless wretch, who used to tremble at its lustre. The sword is returned

to the scabbard, nor are our plains defiled with human gore. Safely may we roam from the rising to the setting sun, nor fear a foe lurking in ambush, or ready to pierce the throbbing breast with an arrow aimed with fatal exactness. Evening now passes sad and solitary, nor brings with it a train of guests, who formerly used to make this ruined fabric resound with shouts of victory or exclamations of bitter disappointment. Methinks I trace the footsteps of thy glorious father. Fancy brings on the wings of the western breeze the sound of a voice once so dear,—and now I see him enter with the spoils of his enemy, which he proudly ranges along the wall, or hangs them up for scenes of future contemplation. Oh! how his fierce
resentful

resentful eye would sparkle when repeating the indignant treatment of those too far above him for his justly excited resentment to reach. — But that eye sparkles no longer: I saw him when the cruel tyrant struck him to the ground:—I saw him bite the dust, struggle, and vainly attempt to grasp the weapon which fell from his relaxed gripe. But come, my child, let us walk; the sun is now in his meridian, and promises an hour's cheering warmth, so salutary to these enfeebled limbs." So saying, he arose from the entrance of his half-demolished castle, and leaning on his grandson, went forth to enjoy the comfortable ray.

Led by the brightness of the day, Llewellyn strayed insensibly beyond his usual limits. Night approached, and brought with it a cold fog. The woody inclosures at the bottom of the mountain prevented their returning by a strait path. The moon arose, but afforded little assistance: a drizzling rain rendered their walk dreary and unpleasant. The clouds were thin, but had enveloped the peak entirely from the view of our perplexed travellers. In vain they sought for their rude dwelling. The clouds increased and almost hid the moon, only permitting a transient view of its beams, too weak to illumine the mountain, which yet remained invisible to the luckless gazers, who sought it with eager eyes.

With

With trembling steps young Lewis followed his fire. The horror, so natural to youthful minds, impressed his with superstitious dread; nor was the aged Llewellyn wholly free from the weakness of ancient times. Uncertain of the path, and fearful of the event, they slowly picked their way among the bushes and roots of trees which intercepted them, — when a deep and awful groan, wafted by the wind, broke upon the astonished pair. They stopped; — all was still. They passed on without daring to give language to their labouring thoughts. It was repeated, and seemed to arise from a thicket at the foot of a rock from which they had just descended. “My father,” said Lewis, “what is that? — —” “Fear not, my child” — — He was

interrupted by several heavy sighs, bursting as it were from a heart convulsed with mortal agonies. The good old man listened; and, though eagerly intreated by his companion to leave the place, could not overcome that strong desire he felt to lend the assistance humanity urged. He entered the thicket. The child almost frantic with fear, conjured him not to venture among the bushes. Llewellyn was not to be dissuaded. He advanced:—a feeble light glimmered before him. “It might be a vapour of the earth, — the place might be the resort of evil spirits, but he had injured no one, why then fear.”—Several reasons for the strange phenomenon rushed upon his mind, and the heart, which could be unappalled in the very heat
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of battle, recoiled at the idea of encountering a danger which yet he resolved not to shun, and which a sensation more exalted than curiosity prompted him to face.

The way was difficult,—the thorns rent his garments, but the artificial light became more conspicuous as the effect of the moon was entirely useless through the intervention of those trees that overhung the leafless underwood. Another groan shook his frame, though it could not destroy his resolution. It proceeded from a cave, which he now discovered by the help of a dim lamp that was burning within it. "Come on, my child," he softly articulated, "this is, if I guess aright, the residence only of lonely misery." They entered

upon their hands and knees. It appeared to be a chasm in the rock which cloled above them, forming a rugged cieling, which, as they advanced, rose to a considerable height: the aperture seemed to run a vast way into its flinty bosom. From a stream which run along the floor proceeded a chilling damp. The sides and roof were ornamented with various petrefactions, and the water that stole in crystal drops along them, adhering to the glittering spars, increased their size and beauty. At the further part of the cave, in a hollow, formed by nature, and raised above the ground, upon a bed of goats skins, was extended the emaciated figure of a man apparently lifeless. Llewellyn gazed with anxious concern at this melancholy object

ject, thus secluded from society, thus condemned to breathe out his soul in starving solitude,—a situation so inimical to the necessary relief benevolence might bestow. With the piety of a monk, he took the dying creature's hand, and conjured him, if yet alive to a sense of his condition, to confess his sins, and trust to Heaven for absolution before his dissolution took place. The almost exhausted wretch, recovering from a fainting fit, raised his half-closed eyes, when his monitor producing a little cross, he eagerly guided it to his parched yet clammy lips, kissed the solemn object, shook his head, and burst into tears. — “Hope for mercy,” said the pious Llewellyn.—“Mercy,” groaned out the man, “no,—there is no mercy for

for me.” — “Thou art too daring, to circumscribe the power of Omnipotence. Is there a crime, however dreadful in its consequences, — is there a hope, however weakly founded in human estimation, that Heaven cannot strengthen, — that Heaven cannot forgive?” — “Alas, my sins have extinguished hope — my crimes are such as would contaminate the purity of innocence to listen to —” “Thou knowest not what thou sayest, presumptuous man. I am shocked at the consequences of thy despair. Thou hast doubtless been engaged in scenes of rapine and murder: thou, perhaps, hast torn from the agonizing mother a helpless infant, and brandished aloft upon thy goary spear the fluttering limbs of the new-born babe; yet, such
is

is the religion of our island, that a deep sincere repentance for sins which custom, example, and even revenge have enforced, we are taught to believe will be accepted. Speak then, if thou hast done all this." — He was interrupted — "I have done more :— I am the duke of Mercia. Yes, I am that Edrie Streou, to whom the gates of bliss must be for ever closed." — The cross dropped from Llewellyn's hand : he turned from the monster who had made him almost childless. — "Edrie Streou! Ah, who but Edrie Streou had slain Llewellyn's eldest born; who but he had destroyed the little brothers of the trembling Lewes! Had he not for many years been a curse to the English nation;— had he not been execrated as a sacrilegious murderer

murderer even by the Danes, whose interest he had falsely espoused to facilitate his diabolical purposes?" The venerable sufferer folded his arms, and stood in speechless contemplation over the destroyer of his race,—the wretch who had forced the sigh of anguish from the breast of a parent, and steeped his reverend cheek in bitter tears. What a trial for patience to endure!—How blighting to the Christian hope of smoothing the sinner's path to eternity! but the burning heat of justly-excited resentment was subdued by the tortures that shook the duke of Mercia's frame, and left no sensation in Llewellyn's bosom stronger or more prevailing than awful commiseration, for he was *indeed* a Christian; and, though living in an age when the light of pure religion

religion was obscured by heathenish and savage enemies to its sacred tenets, caught, from the precepts of his glorious Master, those lovely virtues which distinguish the inestimable doctrine. His silence, his attitude, his whole appearance, struck the dying object as a mystery which his disturbed senses could not develope, and a strong convulsive spasm succeeding the attempt he made to be further understood, aroused his monitor from the stupor of painful surprise, and he immediately applied such assistance as a place so wild and desolate could afford.

The duke transiently recovered, and seemed by his action to aim at some important discovery, which his faltering tongue permitted him
not

not to explain. At last, pointing to a large stone, which probably had served for a table, Llewellyn perceived a bundle of papers ; and, upon his reaching out his hand to take them, a faint gleam of satisfaction beamed over the departing creature's countenance, who, making a violent effort to be understood, obtained with some difficulty the power of articulation. "Take," he said, "the dreadful memorial of Streou's crimes. Driven from society, hunted from mankind, as a monster of inhumanity, I have for six long months lingered in this horrid abode, which the glowing heats of summer could scarcely make habitable. No wonder that the dreary winter's cold should have proved fatal to a constitution so cursed as mine. Roots, berries, and the
rest

rest of the wild produce of the earth, with a scanty portion of bread, procured at the hazard of a life proscribed, have been the chief support of the murderer of kings."—— He stopped. The emotions of a palpitating heart, the struggles of a dissolving body, and the tortures of an awakened conscience, impressed his astonished hearer with trembling devotion, and he attended in silence an event so terrible. A momentary cessation of mortal agony permitted Edrie to renew the confession of self-conviction. Here," he cried, "in the gloom of solitude, made yet more shocking by the awful retrospection of a long life passed in the practice of diabolical impiety, and the commission of acts dreadful to recollection, with no companions but the
fleeing

fleeting forms of those I have murdered; and which are for ever present to my affrighted imagination, I have endeavoured to pen down scenes that continually preclude the approach of peace or sleep,—as the only atonement I can make to future generations for the evils I have showered on their progenitors, and I trust have held forth a picture which no hand but my own could truly delineate;—a picture, composed of the darkest and most malignant shades, without one ray of light to soften the horrid portrait, or gild the black mass of successful vice. Here, then, have I, with such materials as I could venture to procure, recorded transactions that must perpetuate my name to endless infamy. Is there an Englishman whose safety I have

have not endangered? is there a family whose remaining offspring are not bound to curse the destroyer of their fortunes?——but it is over.—O death, thine is the triumph, thou art the conqueror of Edrie Streou! Death approaches, — judgment ensues, — condemnation begun in this palpitating bosom, — receives, decided certainty in the fiat of a vengeful ——” Death, long dreaded by the terrified victim, seized the unfinished sentence. It faltered upon his tongue, it quivered upon his desultory lips. It stopped for ever the power of inflicting wrong, or of repentance, for the consequence of his atrocious deeds.

Llewellyn gazed in solemn stillness upon the close of a life so shocking.

His

His innocent attendant wept bitterly at a scene to him so new. The horrors of death, which had visited his tender relatives, were dreadful from the manner of their visitation; but their pangs were momentary and bodily, — *these* were of the *soul*. The contraction of his pallid countenance, overgrown with a neglected beard, upon which his crimes had stamped dishonour, was to an infantine imagination an object of terror.

Recovering from deep intense meditation, occasioned by the finish of a career so fatal, Llewellyn (after offering up a devout prayer for the extension of mercy to *him* who had denied it to every unfortunate creature, from whose fall he had expected to profit) determined

determined upon the ensuing evening to call together the few peasants whose huts lay scattered wide of his lonely dwelling, and endeavour, with a degree of decency, to inter the awful remains.

His journey homewards was performed with little difficulty, as the rising sun diffused a clear light over Snowdon's lofty peak, which made that promontory still more conspicuous, being viewed through a frosty atmosphere, and was now no longer enveloped in misty darkness.

The occurrences of the preceding night, while they threw a sacred gloom over his mind, induced a deep reverence for the omniscient operations of
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that Deity which had permitted the life of a creature, once so tremendously conspicuous, to terminate in a sad obscurity; nor were his meditations interrupted by aught but the eager desire he felt to peruse the manuscripts so wonderfully obtained, and a wish to render the rite of burial to the wretched duke. This last charitable business performed, he read with wonder and indignant reflexion a recital of events brought about by barbarous cruelty, unchecked by royal power, which in those days could meanly crouch to haughty ferocity.

After several years passed in the practice of every moral and Christian virtue of which his private situation afforded any display, and, finding his

end approaching, Llewellyn committed the important papers to his grandson, with the strictest injunctions to preserve them. Lewes religiously attended to those injunctions, and for many succeeding generations it was kept in his family, with that veneration so commonly paid in ancient times to the commands of the deceased, till the blending of the British, Saxon, and Norman tongues produced a language into which it was carefully translated; and, as the English was continually improving in elegance and purity, the possessors of this memorial from time to time modernised the style; but, as the last translator found it extremely difficult to keep exactly within the bounds of probability, in a history which had unavoidably undergone

some alterations from the various hands into which it had fallen; and, as the consequences of guilt, want, and terror, rendered the unhappy Streou's narrative less clear than a modern reader might approve, written as it were under the agonizing impressions of ineffectual repentance, — he has taken the liberty of filling up those chasms his predecessors had left open, and of altering the general face of the story; to do which, he has searched such records as would enable him to recount several particulars relative to those he had so cruelly persecuted, which the duke could not possibly know, — not giving it as a tale told by himself, and delineating some characters spoken of in ancient history, which, from a supposed abhorrence of his

his own vileness, he had omitted fully to exemplify ; giving likewise that wretched man's description in a stile more consonant to the understanding than the nature of his own self reproaches would admit.

THEY ARE NOT THE SAME

**THE
DANISH
MASSACRE**

AN HISTORICAL FACT.

IN a century distinguished for almost every calamity that could render England a scene of war and desolation, Ethelred, a British prince, contributed by his pusillanimity to the woes

his kingdom endured from the perpetual inroads of the piratical Danes, who, stimulated by that monarch's weakness, took every occasion to distress his subjects, seize their property, enslave their persons, and crush their free-born souls by an exertion of the most despotic tyranny; but, though Ethelred suffered this barbarous innovation upon the rights and privileges of the hapless Britons; though he submitted to foreign insults and the will of an arbitrary minister; though he had, for motives of unjustifiable policy, treacherously deceived the mother of his offspring, yet he could not help feeling a parental pang for the fate of a lovely daughter, with whose delicacy, sex, and principles, the roughness of the savage Danes, the horrors of war,

war, and miseries of her countrymen by no means accorded. To a disposition mild, open, and engaging, she united the soft and elegant graces of polished manners, the more extraordinary for flourishing in a time when national calamities permitted not the cultivation of such pleasing qualities. Her form was agreeable, rather feminine than majestic. Her countenance expressed that modest retiredness so generally according with a mind equally humble. It was true, the clear light of Christianity had for several centuries illumined this isle, yet was it sullied by the dark shades of licentious heathenism; and, as one extreme is commonly displaced by its opposite, she practised the most enthusiastic attachment to a religion too much ob-

scured by the daring infidelity of the times; and, with the earnestness of a soul ardent to take the veil, entreated her father to send her to a monastery lately founded near that part of Mercia which we now denominate the Peak of Derby.

It had, in the ruder epoch of Britain's reign, been a Druid's temple, and was placed upon the edge of an extensive plain, formed in a simple stile, though several additions had been made to give it a decent appearance, and render its interior apartments useful. But, if the front of this venerable fabric offered nothing attracting to those natural philosophers who admire only the grand and romantic, the back part of this building looked upon a spot amply calculated to call forth the
tribute

tribute of praise from all who had a taste for such beauties. The declivity descending from St. Fredeswald was cloathed to the bottom of the eminence with oaks of the most magnificent growth, among which winded a narrow excentric path that led to the side of a stream rising from a vast projecting hill, that seemed split as it were from one on the opposite side of the valley, formed by these promontories, and taking the appearance of those gullies made by the foaming cataracts occasioned by the melting snows in the glaciers of Savoy. The bason, supplied by the trickling stream above-mentioned, received several other little rivulets, and reflected with great advantage the surrounding woods, rocky scenes, and massy stones that seemed

torn from their ancient situation by the destructive deluge ; puzzling those whose curiosity had formerly led them to explore the noble remnant of druidical superstition. Often had they been a theme for admiration and unsatisfied enquiry. No sophistry, no invention, was sufficient to prove or explain how they could otherwise be produced, as human strength was totally incompetent to the placing such huge masses in such a situation.

A scene so wild, so desolately lonely, most powerfully attracted the gentle Elfrida, and she gratefully thanked her father for the permission he so willingly accorded to her wishes to reside at St. Frideswald ; nor did the reception she met with from the abbess and her nuns

at

at all contribute to the regret which a separation from a parent so indulgent must necessarily create; for, in the smooth artificial tenderness of the abbess Algitha, she found the absence of her noble mother supplied, who, about twelvemonths before this period, was reported to be cast away in a voyage she was making to Ireland, her native country; and whose lamented loss added the most forcible reason for Elfrida's quitting the metropolis where she had the mortification to see that dear parent soon forgotten by the king, who had already taken another consort, young, haughty, and the very opposite to his lovely daughter.

But, if Elfrida tasted in this solitary retirement the charms of peace and

virtuous enjoyment, the king, who in losing her society felt a vacuum in his heart, which nothing less than his youthful queen's company could fill, experienced the additional vexation of an unintermitting contention with his courtiers, and the daily fear of seeing the throne of his ancestors overturned by the Danes, of whose vile excesses, monstrous brutality, and tyrannical oppression of his distant subjects, he continually received the most alarming accounts. But Ethelred, dastardly, timid, and irresolute; too indolent to oppose his tumultuous ministers, and too cowardly to face his foreign enemies, permitted those evils to gather head which a timely and vigorous exertion might have dispersed in their infancy. The contemplation of E-

thelred

thelred, inanity, weakness, and obstinacy, (a propensity, which, however it may in general militate against the imputation of the above follies, in this instance was a striking trait in the monarch's disposition, while they excited the indignation of the free-born Briton,) furnished the duke of Mercia, his chief favourite, with the means of gratifying his own ambition, cruelty, and love of lawless power ; — who, disguising the deep plots of a wary statesman under a pretended zeal for the happiness of his countrymen, and possessed of every art necessary to impose upon a prince of the above description, contrived at once to satisfy his unbounded expectations of universal and despotic government, and an inhuman thirst of revenge in the total extirpation of the Danes.

Danes. The schemes he had laid for effecting the diabolical purpose was in conjunction with Huna, general of the British army, while his representation of the Danish ravages soon induced the credulous Ethelred to give his royal sanction, and with it (if the duke succeeded) his full consent to marry the pious Elfrida, as the reward of his services.

While the dreadful plan was negotiating, a circumstance occurred at St. Frideswald to increase that gentle lady's attachment to a monastic life. It was her usual custom, when the evening permitted, to wander among the wild woods of that charming retreat, the situation of which prevented a necessity of enclosing the romantic grounds

grounds that environed the monastery ; more particularly as the enormous precipices formed a natural and impregnable barrier, as was at first supposed, to the place. The solemn silence that generally prevailed in that sequestered spot, — the deep gloom thrown over the whole by the venerable oaks that hardly afforded a path wide enough to accommodate the musing wanderer, furnished additional attractions to a mind detached from worldly glare and grandeur. By the side of the bason that received the descending streams were several seats composed of nothing more elegant than shapeless stones, covered with moss, the growth of ages, and sheltered by a break in the rock, though not large enough to be termed a cavern, yet sufficiently so as to admit several

several of the sisterhood, whose meditations were assisted by a cross and skull, rudely sculptured upon one of the stones.

This solitude suffered no other interruption than what the aerial songsters occasionally afforded, and which by no means lessened the charms of St. Friedswald. Often had the princess, in her evening's excursion, been tempted to explore a path, which, winding round the opposite hill, seemed to lead to the brow of that eminence, and as often had been withheld, from a delicate fear of being observed; but, by a frequent contemplation of an object unimportant in itself, the felt curiosity increase, while a sense of danger seemed lost by an inward persuasion that her safety

safety was secured in her proximity to the monastery. Eager then to find a yet more romantic spot than that she so much admired, and having an hour's daylight to execute her harmless plan, she took advantage of a beautiful evening, and began her peregrination, though not without often looking behind at the ivy-covered casements of her rude habitation. She proceeded, but soon became so much entangled in her progress as to think of returning, particularly as upon turning her head she could no longer perceive the grated windows. Stopping for a moment in some perplexity, she began to consider (and repent of) the rashness which had probably led her into danger: but her self-accusations were suspended by the sound of a harp, which seemed

seemed to issue from the right of her situation. Though a zealous Christian, Elfrida could not wholly conquer the prejudices of her early youth, and immediately appropriated the melody she heard to the benevolence of some aerial spirit, who, in compassion to her perplexity, had taken that method to calm her mind,—for Elfrida was too good and too innocent to place it to any being less pure. She listened, therefore, with an attention little short of rapture. “Thus,” she softly cried, “will the holy and righteous soul be received when divested of her mortal incumbrances. Continue, O gentle harmonist, to sooth a mind devoted to heaven and heavenly exercises.” She now gently advanced, when the music swelled into strains louder and more solemn

solemn than before, accompanied by a sweet plaintive voice, and interrupted by soft and mournful sighs. — Sighs from a *celestial* being! — Elfrida began to think herself mistaken; but what *mortal* could inhabit a place so lonely? — “She would retire; — it argued presumption to venture any further alone, and unprotected as she was; besides, the sun was setting, — vespers would be over. — She would retire.” With some slight trepidation she began to descend the hill, but she lost the path by which she had ascended. Several presented themselves, but all were encumbered with thorny underwood, which caught her robe, and impeded her footsteps. — She was terrified. The bell for prayers inspired her with courage; but the sound could not direct her.

her. A rustling among the bushes shook her very foul. She told her beads, pronounced her pater-nosters, repeated several ave-marias, and devoutly recommended herself to the patron of the monastery. The rustling increased: she stopped almost insensible with fear, when an elegant female suddenly appeared before her,—a *woman*. The princess secretly lifted up her heart in thankful gratitude. There was nothing to fear from a female.—She would apply to her for information.

The lady approached, followed by two beautiful children, and, with a voice and manner that almost inspired veneration, delighted Elfrida with the grace and beauty of her expressions, though

though she was concerned to find the noble stranger as deficient in her knowledge of the place as herself. The melancholy, which seemed to have taken the full possession of her features, appeared to originate in her heart, and the sweetness with which she intreated the princess not to venture alone bespoke *that* heart replete with exquisite sensibility. While in a foreign language she said something to one of the children, they flew with celerity to obey her commands, and speedily returned, attended by several servants, who, after receiving a particular charge from the lady, conducted Elfrida to the path she quitted; when, with many thanks, she dismissed them, not choosing to take them within sight of a place which, through her indiscretion, might

might hereafter become too public to be the resort of sequestered women.

With a mind wholly occupied by this little adventure, Elfrida entered the Gothic gate which led to the monastery, nor could compose her imagination with those pure and undisturbed reflections that generally succeeded the pious duties of the monastery. The secret, which when disclosed, and it no longer carries an air of mystery, loses its importance, and we wonder at the assiduity that prompts us to its discovery. With such a secret was the princess's bosom overcharged. She had never heard of any inhabitants so near St. Frideswald: she had seen no habitation whose appearance might correspond with that of the lady she had
 so

so recently heard and beheld. The following evening set in equally mild and beautiful. She had now an additional reason for visiting her favorite haunt,—it was not impossible but the extraordinary vision might again appear. There could be no danger in exploring a path she was now acquainted with. The lady's countenance she so much admired seemed to indicate some fixed and settled grief. Elfrida adverted to the influence she held over Ethelred's affection; her benevolence suggested the probability of removing by that influence the sorrow which, by the magnetic power of sympathy, had transferred its effects.

Thus, while she again ascended the hill, did the purity of her intentions banish

banish every fearful emotion; but no more could she distinguish the harp's mellifluous strains; the voice no more joined in charming unison with the vibrating strings. Elfrida was dissatisfied, but still advanced,—too much engaged in the object of her pursuit to perceive the sun had withdrawn his rays, and that the clouds had assumed a threatening and tremendous appearance; till, suddenly starting from her reverie, and looking around, she was terrified at the awful gloom that made the solitude she was in appear more dreadful. An artificial night seemed to enclose her: a hollow wind waved the luxurious branches, and some drops of rain gave signs of an approaching storm. The darkness suddenly increased, the thunder rolled entirely round the horizon.

No one in the monastery knew where to seek her. No hope of being pursued lessened the terrors of the moment. To proceed was hazardous,—to return in such a war of elements might be equally dangerous. Still her feet, impelled as it were by some intuitive principle, carried her forward. The lightning, as she came to a part of the wood less encumbered by trees, gleamed on her pallid visage. “Holy Mary,” she cried, “assist an innocent votary, whose curiosity, dignified by a wish of serving her fellow-creature, has plunged into danger. To thee, if I escape the threatened horrors that surround me, do I dedicate a day of solemn fast. To thee will I sacrifice the inquisitive restless spirit which could not content itself within the sa-

cred walls of St. Frideswald, nor ever wander beyond the bounds prescribed by thy religious worshippers, unless such circumstances should occur as may render the gratification of that spirit strictly justifiable."

This little apostrophe brought her to the top of the hill. With a trembling heart she beheld a vast, wide and barren heath. The boisterous winds raised in whirling eddies the light dust that filled the different cross roads:—but one she noticed, with fearful transport, led to a stately edifice, the more remarkable in that wild region, as it was partly surrounded by venerable groves and cultivated grounds. Uncertain whether she should approach the building or retire through the dismal

mal woods, which, agitated by the tempest, presented an uncomfortable view. Elfrida stood suspended; but the reiterated flashes quickened her resolution, and the sonorous peals which followed allowed no longer time for deliberation; but, hastening towards the mansion that seemed by its stately doors being thrown open, to invite the weather-beaten traveller. Entering with cautious steps, she was met in the hall by that noble figure to whose apparent distress she owed her present inconvenient situation, who immediately recognizing the frightened virgin, invited her with the frankest politeness to partake of a shelter so happily accommodated to her present situation. Elfrida, with timid gratitude, acceded to her request, and followed the hospi-

table lady to a noble apartment, where she was delighted with the appearance of several beautiful children, variously employed, according to their respective ages. The cheerfulness which animated their innocent features was mournfully contrasted by the melancholy that predominated in their mother's countenance, when she announced herself to the princess by that endearing appellation. "I am," she said, with a heavy sigh, "the unhappy parent of these sweet captives." — Captives! — Elfrida shuddered. Was she then the inmate of a prison? Was a house so noble the abode of slavery, and this charming family subject to a tyrant, for none but tyrants she thought could confine such gentle beings? — "Alas," continued the lovely woman, "you seem surpris-

fed to hear me lament the loss of that liberty which, from meeting me yesterday abroad, you might suppose fully in my possession; but, though indulged with an unrestrained power of wandering about these environs, I am still a prisoner,—born to better hopes, nurtured in a court, sister of a king, and wife to—O dreadful!—wife to a noble injured count; yet, a sad victim to inhuman politics, I am forced from the arms of a husband, the bosom of friendship, and compelled, with these helpless companions of my wretchedness, to pass the hours in a lonely uncomfortable state, expecting every moment to fall a sacrifice to a barbarous system contrived by the enemy of my country.”—

The entrance of a nobleman of awful demeanor interrupted the tale of distress to which Elfrida had listened with gentle pity: but that pity was changed to terror, when the lady, seizing her hand, and with a voice no longer softened by the sweet recollection of past felicity, a face no longer impressed with mild affecting sorrow, but crimsoned over with indignant rage, while her eyes seemed to lighten with anger, "See," she exclaimed, "See, beauteous dame, the cause of all my grief. Know you not the duke of Mercia, the detestible gaoler of *Gumilda*, the destroyer of my happiness? See you not murder gleaming in his vindictive eye? See you not the meditated extinction of the Danes in that gloomy aspect?—Say, monster," and she

she shook with fury, "say, where is the count,—where is my husband?— O Sweyn, why comest thou not to revenge a sister's injuries? — King of Denmark, thou knowest not the sufferings of Gunilda.— Come, Sir, I see the execrable purpose of your soul. Fired with the generous hope of being a mediatrix between the two courts, I have trusted myself and children in the hands of treachery. — Why, thou vile duke, dost thou detain us here? Why not treat us *like* hostages, not slaves. Tell me, what have you done with my husband? Restore him to me, let us suffer together"———"Is it by these violent expressions, proud woman, you think to conquer my fixed, my patriotic purpose," answered the duke, while his brow was contract-

ed, and his features distorted by ill-concealed passion. "Do you expect an undeserved emancipation should follow such haughty demands. No, madam; confined here as hostages from the court of Denmark, you must wait with patience the event of our negociation. "Alas," said the unhappy Gunilda, how long have I waited in sad sorrow a change in your resolutions, for on you depend all I might in reason hope and all I so much dread." Scarcely able to confine the agitation of his mind within the necessary bounds, he rudely turned in silence from her, when the fair Elfrida met his eye, and raised astonishment, admiration, and curiosity in his flinty bosom. The daughter of Ethelred was soon recollected by the duke, and with transport

port he beheld the stipulated reward of his black schemes against the Danes; but how she became a witness of Gunilda's anguish was a mystery not likely to be explained by that lady, who he was certain would impress her mind with the most inveterate sentiments against him, and it was the very determined wish of his soul to inspire her with every favourable disposition towards him. To meet her then with one who had experienced the basest treatment from him, and who had courage to charge him with his hypocritical deceptions, while she expected every calamity his plotting soul could load her with, was totally inimical to the designs he had formed; and in the full practice of successful villainy, he felt a glance from that dart which one

day would pierce him with a thousand wounds.

With the deepest respect he saluted the princess, to whom he had never been an interesting object, for most violently was he suspected of some horrible treachery in her mother's sad catastrophe, so that she beheld him with indiscrivable terror, and whose aversion from what she had now witnessed was fixed and decided; nor were her sensations of the most soothing nature, when she considered herself as under the roof of such a powerful and vindictive nobleman. The storm had ceased, but it was night: she was at least two miles distant from St. Friedswald. Her absence, she doubted not, had by that time created the
most

most painful alarm to the abbess, and how to return in safety without some protection was not in nature to determine. Her cogitations were interrupted by the duke, who asked by what happy turn he owed the unexpected honor of her presence. With cold reluctance she informed him of the motive which had induced her to wander so far, but concealed the wish that had arisen in her bosom to save Gunilda, to whom she yet hoped to render some essential service. That Elfrida had retired to a monastery he well knew, but that she had fortunately chosen St. Frideswald for her residence was a circumstance of much import to him, who was absolute governor of his extensive domains, and claimed more particular authority over

the abbess, whom he had indulged with several immunities. It was without the smallest knowledge of the duke's proximity to St. Frideswald that she had been led by her father to make choice of that retirement. Glowing then with the idea that he should be suffered to plead without restraint a passion which, in his licentious bosom, was degraded to a meer sensual appetite, he adverted no longer to the influence Gunilda might obtain over the princess, as, from the plot he had formed, a separation between those ladies must soon ensue, but, with a proper guard to attend them, he conducted Elfrida by another road to the monastery, though not till she had taken a solemn and grateful leave of the injured countess, with whom, notwithstanding the dislike

dislike she had conceived to the duke, she inly determined by some secret means to correspond.

Her arrival at St. Frideswald gave the highest pleasure to the superior, who was distracted with the agonizing suspicion that Elfrida had by some means fallen a prey to the Danes, who, she conceived, might have discovered their recess, and would, if so, she doubted not, soon lay siege to the monastery, which was ill calculated to withstand any violent attack; but the arrival of her boarder and her illustrious conductor quieted the aged abbess's fears, and she received a private charge from the duke, (to prevent the princess's evening walks,) with an humble promise of obedience.

Unused

Unused to controul, Elfrida was extremely shocked to find her wish of visiting the glen so positively interdicted, and, with the dignity of royalty, questioned the abbess upon the motive of her refusal. Fearful of disclosing the duke's request, and yet ardently desirous of obliging a nobleman so powerful, she hesitated, a motive for her non-compliance by no means satisfactory to the lady, who could not, with all her humility, cheerfully obey a command enforced without reason, and unsupported by a just authority. However, turning with silent dignity from the superior, she ascended a half-ruined battlement, which had not given way to the effects of mouldering time, or the more violent assaults of savage ferocity, and stedfastly

fastly contemplated the rude yet picturesque scene beneath her, revolving in her mind the strange events of the preceding night, and the sudden, unaccountable, and mysterious refusal which prevented her again exploring that sequestered path she so much delighted in.

While thus employed, a confused alarm of mixed discordant voices interrupted the solemn repose of her soul. She cast a fearful eye to the left of the eminence before her, and perceived, rising above the tops of the trees, unusual clouds of dust. Such an extraordinary phenomenon terrified her gentle heart, without the alleviation of a present solution. She gazed, listened, and foreboded nothing less than

than the approach of the tumultuous Danes, whose daily innovations upon British liberty were a constant theme even in the lonely monastery, as different travellers who called for relief gave new and tremendous descriptions of their tyrannical impositions. The shouts, exclamations, and cries of distress, which seemingly drew nearer, and were consequently more distinct, increased Elfrida's fears, and deprived her of the power of seeking the abbess, but with a wild and vacant eye, bent upon she hardly knew what, and clouded with streaming tears of apprehension, she continued fixed to the spot. Her attendant, whose attachment would not suffer her to quit her mistress, though a prey to every whimsical idea a timid fancy could create, vainly entreating

treating her to descend, and endeavour to investigate an affair so dreadfully alarming. "And see, madam," she added, "they approach. Among yon trees I can descry the glittering arms of a warrior." Her lady turned towards the spot to which Winifred pointed, and perceived, indeed, a chief of a gallant appearance, his helmet almost covered by a plume of waving feathers, his person tall, graceful, and completely cased in polished steel, a drawn sword in one hand, in the other a lady.

They descended the hill with a rapid motion, as if pursued. Elfrida started, and with a convulsive exclamation of surprise, "It is," she cried, "it is the noble Gunilda. The mystery"

is

is explained." She said no more, but quitted the battlement, passed the broken steps, which led from it to the interior apartments, and in a hurried accent entreated the gates might be opened for the reception of her, who, she doubted not, was driven to seek safety from strangers. Her request was complied with: Gunilda entered. Her pallid looks and almost breathless manner, indicating the extreme additional anguish of her soul, grasping Elfrida's hand, and at the same moment addressing the ancient Alghitha, "I am come," she cried, "to claim a sacred protection for myself and children," pointing to the lovely innocents who had been her companions at the palace, and whom she had brought from thence. "Within these walls I
would

“ would hope to find an afylum. — Death stalks in gloomy terror through the land. My countrymen, my kindred, perhaps my husband, are marked out for fanguinary vengeance. To the kindness of the benevolent Morcar we are indebted for our present escape. Though an enemy to my cause, though a faithful adherent to your king, and though actually employed in the execrable scheme of chastising our nation, his humanity is not proof against my entreaties; but yesterday the horrid command was issued. Say then, will you not act in concert with this generous Briton. Look at these hapless unfortunates,—must they bleed upon the quivering spear? must their wretched mother sink under the infliction of a thousand wounds?” She stopped

stopped. The horrible idea shook her whole frame. Maternal tenderness presented to her fearful imagination the mangled limbs of her beloved children wantonly scattered upon the field of battle by a barbarous foe, nor could hope itself, elastic, lively, and presumptuous as it is, repel the dreadful visions she hourly expected might be realized.

The abbess was thunderstruck. Confined in her notions; flattered by monkish superstition, with a disposition naturally mean, mistrustful, and totally devoid of that noble principle of benevolence, which cannot be governed by national prejudice, but blazes into action whenever opportunity calls forth the charming attribute;—a principle

ciple which glows in the savage bosom with a flame as fierce, though not so pure, as that lightened up and supported by the sacred tenets of revealed religion, and as this lovely virtue could neither flourish as a native or an exotic in her narrow mind, its place was supplied by artful cunning and fordid selfishness. She sat gloomily silent, while revolving every possible consequence this lady's admission might produce. The duke of Mercia had not informed her of his motive for restraining Elfrida's rambles, nor that Gunilda was his prisoner; but he had given her a hint of his sudden attachment to Elfrida. The princess therefore,—the appearance of Morcar, —the distress of his charge,—and the nature of *her* request, perplexed the superior. She remained

remained involved in a profound agitation till roused by the noble Briton. "Come, venerable woman," he said, "linger not in your determination.—Protect this unhappy female. Her situation claims all that assistance your power can so largely dispense. Your sanctuary is sacred: none dare approach its hallowed walls without permission. The work of death, and a glorious revenge summon me hence. Though a revenge so laudable enflames my soul against the Danes, yet humanity recoils at the scenes I must witness; nor is it upon such helpless objects as these the uplifted weapon should fall; for, though through them we wound a tyrannical nation, the channel is too pure to convey a vengeance so terrible. Let then this royal lady

lady and her little ones enjoy the privilege claimed even by the midnight assassin. Refuse not an asylum to such injured sufferers. I must hasten from hence, but with you I trust she will be safe till we can convey her to Denmark." "Yes," added Elfrida, whose every idea was concentered in the hope of serving Gunilda, and who, observing Alghitha's reluctance to accept her, felt the consequence of her own dignity, as being of kingly descent, swell her heart, "Yes, gracious lord, she *shall* be safe. I will receive her. The daughter of Ethelred offers protection, confidence, and affiance to this desolate countess. — Come, madam, fear nothing; not even my great father would oppose his child. Who then," and she looked round with all the grace
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of majesty in her eye, "who then shall dare to impugn Elfrida's will?"

Speechless with gratitude the fair Dane bent her knee to heaven, cast an empassioned look upon her offspring, redeemed, as she then supposed, from death, pressed Elfrida to her breast, over whom she shed tears, extorted by a variety of causes; and then, turning with a wild and piercing gaze to Morcar, sobbed out, "Generous son of the noble Godwin, accept my thanks for a boon so precious; and Oh remember, when the sword your wrongs have unsheathed is lifted against my wretched countrymen; remember, should the name of Raulin reach your ear, that on the extinction of that name depends Gunilda's destruction.—

But

But you know my husband, and surely the hand which raises from the lowest abyss of despair his faithful wife, will not by means so fatal stab her peace; will not in Raulin's death plant daggers in this bosom keener than those from which I am, by your means, emancipated." The general bowed over the anxious petitioner's hand, which she tendered, and promised, should count Raulin even attempt to provoke him to battle, he would remember Gunilda, and be patient.

During this scene, the abbess could hardly arrange her thoughts, or recover from the surprise Elfrida's behaviour had occasioned. That a lady so pious, so gentle, so conformable to the rules of their order, should, in a

case of such importance, almost defy ecclesiastical authority, and give the permission none but the superior could grant, and what in her opinion was extremely improper to expect, was a problem neither art or cunning could solve. It militated totally against the expectation she had conceived, of receiving, through Elfrida's means, the highest religious honours—that of governing a king's daughter. It mortified her with the idea, that, by throwing off her obedience, she should disoblige the duke, who, Algitha readily conceived, had some deep motives for the restraint he had recommended. In fine, there was no clue powerful enough to lead her to the development of this perplexing affair; and, though awed by a species of behaviour

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so new, and a fearlessness of manner so uncommon to the princess, she only determined to acquaint Edrie with the present disposition of things at St. Frideswald, nothing doubting but what the duke might dislike in her intelligence he could easily remove; for of Ethelred's power she did not account, as it was merely secondary to the nobleman's she so ardently wished to please.

Morcar now took a hasty leave of the lovely friends, but lingered a little while, making his acknowledgments to Elfrida for her liberal reception of the countess; and a sigh, breathed almost unknown to himself, accompanied his thanks for the good wishes she expressed for his safety. Gunilda saw

him depart with a mixture of every passion a noble mind can feel. He had relieved, rescued, and protected her from evils, the bare supposition of which was dreadful in the extreme. He had recommended her welfare with a warmth expressive of the most disinterested kindness. But he was now departed, confessedly to make every retaliation of vengeance a perfidious oppressive enemy deserved.— Yet of what nation were these enemies composed? — the nation of her progenitors, her native countrymen, her brother's subjects, her own relatives. "Alas, alas!" she thought, "though me and mine enjoy a safety scarcely expected, and still less so from a determined though generous foe; — though these vast and lofty walls interfere

terfere between me and destruction, what friendly arm shall interpose with strength sufficient to ward the blow from Raulin's heart! That gallant heart, beating high with the hope of rendering essential service to those who shall look up to him for help, will it not chearfully oppose itself to the sword of the English rather than stoop to acknowledge a British master?—O Morcar, while involved in the heat of battle, — while pursuing the vanquished, too feeble to contend against thy power,—will then thy promise remain in full force? Young, vigorous, in the prime of manhood, should Raulin meet thee, will he stoop to ask for mercy, and wilt thou then remember Gunilda's request, to bear, perhaps, even the imputation of cowardice

rather than lift a hand of vengeance against a life, compared to which her own is but a trifle? — No, no! I see them now engaged: I see resentment sparkle in the eye and flush the cheeks of Raulin: I see the generous Morcar retreat from the uplifted battle-axe, while the name of Gunilda, pronounced to charm my husband from his purpose, is insufficient. He repeats his blow, he presses on the Briton. Morcar eludes his rage, — a rage heightened by the mysterious carriage of his antagonist, — who, fired by the opprobrious term of coward, no longer remembers a promise glory itself renounces; — and now they engage on equal terms. — I can think no more. Conquered or conqueror, Raulin stands no chance. Thor, Frega, Woden, ye
whose

whose horrid rites have made humanity shudder; ye who, while I utter the customary invocation, my soul can scarcely acknowledge, lend the assistance a hero deserves, or I shall more than question the power of those gods the daring Britons laugh at."

The solemn tolling of the evening bell interrupted ejaculations so mournful. Elfrida, though tenderly attached to the noble heathen, would not neglect her usual devotions, but prepared to accompany the nuns to vespers.—
 "You are going," said Gunilda, with a sigh, "to the worship of your God. You are going, doubtless, to solicit his suffrage in favor of those who are now perhaps employed in scenes of death, of war, and bloodshed. I cannot ask the prayers of one who wishes,

it is probable, the extermination of all our race. But, O lady, while a just resentment, which I cannot blame, fills your breast against a people you have reason to detest, let one spark of pity for poor Gunilda soften the asperity of your petition; for, is not your God the God of Mercy? Is he not represented to us as a contemner of persecution? He bears no title expressive of war, rage, or revenge; surely then you cannot worship him as a *vindictive* being? or, if you should, let my sad situation be not forgotten in your oraisons." "Come, thou distressed matron," interrupted Elfrida, "enter with me the abode of Omnipotence. Observe our mode of adoration, we offer no bloody sacrifices; no devoted victim smokes upon our altar,

altar, no innocent creature offers up its spotless soul to a vengeful fancied deity. All our oblations are in the true spirit of Christian peace: for the success of *that* we pray, for the acquisition of *that* we implore a holy Saviour." The countess mused upon the proposition: at length, "Lead on," she cried, "I will attend."

Elfrida was delighted, and conducted her to the chapel, where service was already begun. The magnificent altar, the lofty cross, the flowing vestments of the priests, the clear melodious voices of the choir, (just then engaged in tuneful sacred responses, while various fine-toned instruments filled up each awful pause,) thrilled the fair Pagan's soul. She listened

with an extatic fervor. Her whole frame seemed as though shook by a divine extacy. Her eyes overflowed with tears of rapture. The burial of a nun was to follow these usual ceremonies. The dirge-like pathetic expression of the music, — the stone coffin, born with difficulty along the aisle, — the choristers preceding the procession, and chanting a melancholy service, nearly compleated her conversion. During the whole she took not her attention from the affecting scene, but, when it was concluded, lifted up her hands and eyes, exclaiming, “Ye Gods of my countrymen, who delight in blood, — ye who can hear unmoved the virgin’s sighs, the mother’s groans, the infant’s cries, — ye who enjoy a rancorous pleasure in
the

the depopulation of a world, — no more will I kneel at your altars, no more deprecate your wrath or feast your savage hearts with the sacrifice of the human race. From this moment I abjure a belief so barbarous ; from this hour I renounce a faith so tyrannical. Gunilda and her children will be *Christians*. — Come, holy priest, behold these innocents ; incorporate them with those of your religion : seal our reception with that mystical sign so efficacious and so pure." Her request was granted, and by the solemn office she resigned her Danish name of Gunilda to the softer one of Athela.

Fatigued and overcome by the various occurrences of the evening, Athela gladly accepted the offer of

an apartment for herself and children, where, notwithstanding the perturbation of her mind, she enjoyed some hours repose, and awoke with a tranquillity partly induced by the step she had taken, and partly by the hope that Raulin might escape the rage of his foes. The appearance of her amiable protectress, whose countenance was animated by the sweet satisfaction, arising from a contemplation of Athella's features, no longer distorted by wild starts of passion, or clouded by tormenting despair, was peculiarly desirable. She arose, and fervently embraced the lovely creature to whom she owed every expectation of earthly happiness. "I know not," she said, "in what terms to express the feelings of a grateful spirit for the revival of an
almost

almost extinguished hope. But yesterday, and I beheld at no great distance the downfall of Athela's greatness. The loss even of life itself appeared inevitable: the destruction of her infants seemed written in the book of fate.—Now, by the interposition of those from whom I dreaded a doom so sad, are we secured. Great have been my afflictions even from early youth, but no wonder, — I worshipped those who could not help me. I depended upon the feeble reed, and neglected the mighty oak.” “No more, my friend,” interrupted Elfrida, “of a common obligation; but, if you will gratify a request I have long meditated to make, say by what means you became subject to the duke of Mercia, and (I shame to say it) the governor

vernor of my father." — " Yes, lady, if events which have nothing to recommend them but simple truth can excite your attention, I will recite scenes that, alas, may pain your gentle heart, but I think they will strengthen your pity for the daughter of a king.

" It is unnecessary to mention the royalty of a descent which even my enemies deem unquestionable, and which once inflated my pride with a haughtiness misfortune could not conquer; but now, subdued by reason and over-ruled by reflection, I can join with your gentleness in condemning passions unworthy a seat in the female bosom, and utterly inimical to the profession I have chosen, whose first
grace

grace your prevalent example induces me to pronounce is humility. Nor think, madam, this change is instantaneously made, for long have I rejected in mind many of the absurd and shocking customs which mark the Pagan system, and long have admired such tenets of your faith, the practice of which have come within my notice while prisoner to Mercia's duke. But not from him, not from *his* behaviour did my soul catch the smallest emanation of goodness; for his neglect of every moral virtue, every Christian excellence, disgusted rather than invited my belief. But, contagious as his influence was, it did not extend to all the inmates of the Mercian palace. Some there were whose gentle manners declared the means by which their ferocity

city had been softened, their tempers refined, and their dispositions humanized ; and this led me to admire what yet I could not comprehend,—to love the effect of a cause I was too ignorant and uninformed to develope ; but, when your benevolence and Morcar's generosity, qualities so rare amongst the high-born and warlike of our country, united their power, as flowing from the religion you profess, I began to look with contempt upon the gods of the Danes, and embraced with my whole heart that light which pervaded my dazzled senses, and dissipated the clouds of superstition ; more particularly as I now believe it calms and regulates those dark and malignant passions which the vile mythology of

of

of the Pagan system encourages and supports to the most criminal excess.

“ It may perhaps somewhat surprise your noble nature to be told the furious consequences of unrestrained rage ; but, remember, it was the operation of unenlightened principles, which could not bear the slightest opposition, and to the indulgence of such principles am I possibly indebted for many of the sorrows I have endured, since my education in a barbarous and uncivilized court was devoid of that soft polish so essential to smooth the roughness even of the most precious gem, and both my brother and myself grew up under the impression that every one who could not boast a birth so noble were to be considered but as slaves to
our

our imperious will. It was about the seventeenth year of my age, when a descendant of that Alfred whom you so deservedly stile *the Great*, and who possessed many of his royal progenitor's excellent qualities, had by his prudent management in some measure foiled the Danes, and put a stop to their innovations, that your father Ethelred sent a private embassy to the court of Denmark to negotiate an honourable peace for the Britons, and to propose an alliance between me and the warlike Guiderius, whom, as he had at that time no male issue, he doubtless meant as his successor; particularly as he derived a title to Ethelred's favor from a consanguinity not very distant, and as his active talents promised some relief to the more timid king,

king, who delighted rather in peace than in war. To this offer from a powerful monarch, in behalf of a nobleman remarkable for wisdom, valour, moderation, and skill in the polite arts, no possible objection could be made. Deeply did my father look into the importance of such a marriage; but Sweyn, who dreaded a rival in the person of one so famed for military excellence, secretly employed the most forcible elocution to detach me from a scheme which held out the most supreme gratification even to royal pride. Alas, had he known the predilection his sister had made, all those fears might have been spared: had the haughtiness which blinded him to the softer passions permitted, he must have known the perfections of
count

count Raulin, his friend and confident, had made a strong impression upon a heart fenced by a high sense of hereditary greatness from every weaker emotion; but, with features distorted by an apprehensive agitation, and a voice almost stifled from the various emotions that impressed their effects upon his countenance, he made the proposal he so much dreaded would be accepted, and would scarcely suffer me to express my positive refusal, but seizing my hand, "Thou art right, my sister," he exclaimed; "Guiderius is no match for Gunilda. The sovereign of a petty isle, over which we maintain increasing power, (for I think nothing of the late trifling conquest,) ought not to choose a consort for Denmark's princess. Believe your brother.

To

To him is well known the policy which induces an artful king to try the success of a plot that must (if completed) ensure to us a lasting slavery. Besides, what think you of the descendant of a prince, who, we are told, could ingloriously sink to the character of a spy, and in the paltry disguise of an harper enter the camp of our ancestor to obtain his ungenerous ends? and has not Guiderius practised at different times a mode of behaviour equally mean? What credit then shall we give to the professions of one so despicably subtle? It is true, we have been foiled, but the sword is not blunted. It sleeps not in the scabbard, but waits only a convenient opportunity; when sharpened to its keenest edge, shall cut its way to the hearts of our ferocious

rocious antagonists. Doubt not our
 royal father will give his suffrage in
 favour of a scheme that holds suppo-
 sed advantages to the lovers of sloth-
 ful peace. Worn out with age and in-
 firmities, he looks not to those con-
 sequences that must involve his legal
 successor and subjects in the most dire-
 ful calamities, should such an union
 take place; nor sees beneath the mask
 of fair pretence the hideous features
 of grim destruction. Another pow-
 erful objection militates against Ethel-
 red's wishes. Is not Guiderius a
 Christian? and must Gunilda conform
 to those fantastical rites, the obser-
 vance of which has already produced
 that formidable monster Persecution?
 Must she reject the worship of our
 great and warlike deities, defying by
 such

such a step the protection of the mighty Thor, and disgracing that awful belief we derive from our Saxon forefathers. My soul detests the cunning Briton. I hate his policy, nor can be blinded by the fine-spun web of deep sophistry with which he aims to cover plots too glaring to be hidden by delusions so flimsy. By *me* then, my sister, send your scornful rejection. I will give it in terms of the haughtiest defiance. We will not allow the ambitious Guiderius' self complaisance, the smallest title to his own congratulation. He shall not for one moment suppose we could demur to a decision effronted honour hastens to give."

O madam, how little did the noble Briton deserve a treatment so opprobrious,

brious, and how did my heart burn to contradict the illiberal assertions of the brother I so truly loved, and whose sentiments, in those points where our dignity was concerned, were so exactly similar to my own. But, absorbed in the idea of him who governed every feeling of my soul, and supremely happy to find I should not be obliged to forfeit a hope on which was supported every prospect of future bliss, selfishness stifled each nobler principle; and, while I secretly admired the conduct and venerated the character of a hero of whom I had often heard the highest praise, yet did my partiality for another deprive me of fortitude sufficient to explode those narrow censures which tended to depreciate a gallant Christian, and tacitly acceded to the means my
brother

brother pointed out, to testify our sense of an offer that ought at least to have excited a grateful return. Alas, Elfrida, when one boundless passion occupies our soul, how feeble are the operations of the more exalted virtues! how firmly do we shut our eyes to reason, justice, humanity, prudence, friendship. A sigh, perhaps a tear, may mark the inefficacious emotions of a heart strongly attached by objects of sympathy; but that is all: we pass lightly over them, and recur to the sweet prevailing hoarded affection of the soul. But Ethelred accepted not the answer a fierce and jealous prince returned, till reiterated affronts obliged Guiderius to withdraw his claim, and your father to attempt a vengeance my brother had too justly drawn upon

our nation, to which our parent was obliged to submit; for, unable to contend with youth and health in the full practice of an unbridled violence, excited by ambition and the fear of losing a crown, on which depended every fancied glory, he felt himself obliged to relinquish his own weighty reasons in favor of what he had eagerly strove to accomplish, and soon after resigned a kingdom which he prophesied, in his last moments, would bring no permanent tranquillity with it, and Sweyn ascended a throne he had long considered as his right.

“Encouraged by my brother’s partial notice of the noble Raulin, I ventured to solicit his ear upon the subject nearest my heart; but all the eloquence

quence of love, all the tenderness of consanguinity, was insufficient to repel the storm of passion my confession had raised. "You have thought proper, madam," said he, "to unite yourself with one who cannot boast a royal lineage, and now dare my utmost resentment by an information so humiliating. Go, madam; go to the man you have chosen, and glory in the honor of superceding a great and awful king. Yes, precipitate and degenerate Gunilda, you have disappointed my dearest hopes : you have lost the prospect of royalty for ever. Olaus, monarch of Norway, was the person I had chosen to keep up the blood of our progenitors." I could hear no more. That untameable spirit, which had hitherto distinguished me, prepa-

red the most bitter retorts, and I entered upon my defence in terms I now blush to say, violent and unfeminine.

Our conference ended with my formal banishment from court, and my husband's deprivation of those honours he had so dearly earned. Not satisfied with vengeance so exemplary, the haughty Sweyn cast about how to divide a faithful couple, who found in each other's society all a stern ambitious brother denied. But vain and futile were his endeavours. Separated from those who would artfully have pointed out the advantage we had lost, and engaged in the delightful employment of contemplating the infantine beauties of a rising generation, we were permitted for several years to enjoy

joy a tranquillity succeeding troubles made yet more precious to remembrance.

Those friends, who had yet an eye to the restoration of Raulin's glory, obscured, as it were, in an inglorious retreat, represented to Sweyn how much it derogated from his dignity to suffer his sister's husband to languish in humble life, while all the active world were in arms, and took occasion by their well-meant insinuations to rouse his martial spirit. Fired with the hope of acquiring fame sufficient to expunge the blot he fondly fancied would otherwise be indelible, the count prepared to quit a family whose happiness depended upon his presence, and received with transport a commission

from the king, to take the command of the army destined to make another descent upon Britain. Honor, valour, the hope of seeing his wife restored to her former state, all united to sweeten a pill (to me) alas, so bitter; and he joyfully accepted a trust so sacred and so unlimited.

To conquer the Britons was a point on which hung Denmark's safety. To be chosen by his sovereign, as the principal means by which a victory so important was to be gained, blinded him to the covert malice of Sweyn's intention, which was doubtless to separate us for ever, and with his endeavours to reconcile me to his departure was mixed his exulting expectation of overcoming a nation so formidable.

dable. The spirit of our forefather conquered feminine timidity, and, too proud to discover the anguish of my mind, I beheld, from the window of a half-ruined castle, the manœuvres of Raulin's soldiers, who were drawn up on a vast plain, with an unchanged countenance, while my bosom throbbed with anxious fear. Oh! never, dearest lady, can I forget or describe my internal feelings, when, in all the pomp of warlike state I beheld my husband marshalling and dispensing his commands to the troops. What a graceful, a dignified, an animated figure! Hope sparkled in his eye, the assurance of victory flushed his features. With a swift but regular motion the several battalions drew off. Their general passed near the window.

He looked up : a tear marked his approach ; it remained upon my cheek. With an expressive meaning he pointed towards the army : it was then in full march. Ambition, how didst thou at that cruel moment fix a deep and deadly sting in my heart. He gave a soldier's adieu, spurred his noble charger, and followed his people. The creature soon bore him from my sight. I had scarcely time to wave my handkerchief, and was thankful to the sun for gilding his armour with a refulgence that enabled me for some time to distinguish the brightness it emitted.

The days now rolled on with a melancholy tediousness. The company of three sweet infants only added to the poignancy of my sorrow. My dearest wishes,

wishes, my invaluable treasure, was in Britain. Exposed to every danger, the count was establishing his fame in several enterprises equally hazardous and dangerous. Success was various, but envy could not accuse Raulin of carelessness or cowardice.

“He had been absent near twelve months, when my distress amounted to pangs little short of distraction, arising from the intelligence of his total defeat, and that, though the generous Guiderius interfered, his enemies had deprived him of the power of recovering his fame by a sudden and violent death. Ah! what information was this to a soul so exquisitely alive to a passion that was the support and comfort of my existence. I flew to the

royal presence, regardless of my character, my consequence, my hate.— I accused my brother of the most diabolical intent. I execrated the gods themselves, who could permit the fall of a hero so illustrious. The rapidity of my accusation, the keenness of my reproaches, the excess of my anguish, deprived the king of fortitude enough to exculpate himself from the charge, and he would, I doubt not, at that moment have resigned the crown itself to purchase his emancipation from the guilt which made a coward of him.

“ In vain did those about me attempt to calm my emotions. In vain did Sweyn, in a low and hesitating accent, press me to disbelieve the truth of a report so terrible. I was deaf to every

every request to bear my fate with moderation, but hastened to the seaside, attended only by a few servants, where, by the dint of an application too powerful to be resisted, I procured a vessel to sail with me for England. Accustomed to be obeyed without controul, my vehemence was irresistible. The sailors flew to obey me. One faithful maid would not leave me in this horrible crisis of my fate, and, of five male domestics, one only followed my desperate fortune. He was extremely ancient; but the inviolable attachment he had ever professed to Raulin, to whom he vowed never to quit me, induced him to trust the remnant of a decaying life upon the precarious element, and he would not desert his mistress in a situation so truly

miserable. Our passage was short but tempestuous, as if the very elements had united their influence to present nothing but the most melancholy pictures to my soul.

The hours which passed while I was confined to the ship seemed insupportably tedious. We landed. England was a scene of horror. I fought the field of battle. Alas, every heath, every plain, presented a view of desolating war. Distant shouts, the clangor of trumpets, the noise of drums, mixed their discordant sounds. The villages bore shocking marks of devastation. The little farms, on which their respective owners had supported a numerous progeny, were half consumed, exhibiting in their smoking ruins

ruins the dismal effects of savage vengeance. My servants would have pointed out the danger of rushing unprotected through an enemy's country, where the interference of friend or foe might be equally hazardous. — Alas ! they came not in search of a beloved husband's remains. They came not to rescue his honoured corpse from infamy, nor examined with looks of decided despair, the mangled bodies over which they hastened, and which were many of them in a state not to permit a strict scrutiny. Possessed with the idea that Raulin was numbered with the dead, and incapacitated by excessive agony from the operation of reason, I continued my search without adverting to the improbability of finding him in a field of battle, who must
long

long ere that time, have been consigned to the silent tomb, or be thrown with numbers more into one common grave.

“The shades of night furrounded me while pursuing my melancholy employment, and it was not till then I began to be sensible of the impropriety of the step I had taken. With no guard but a feeble old man and my faithful Elgiva, — no prospect of an asylum even from the inclemencies of a climate, which, though milder than my own, was at that season of the year extremely rigorous, — equally dreading the protection of my own countrymen, and the ferocity of their enemies, — think, dear lady, what were my feelings when, upon lifting up my eyes, which

which had been so intent upon the object of their pursuit as hardly to notice the stealing gloom that hung upon the once-barren heath, (alas! now fruitful with human sacrifices,)—think, what were my sensations when I discerned a troop of horsemen descending an opposite eminence. The danger of my situation now broke at once upon my affrighted sense. Their motion was irregular, straggling at unequal distances from each other: they seemed as though returning from a bloodless victory. Theodore caught my hand, and in a tremulous accent entreated we would retire behind some bushes that lay somewhat to the left, till the supposed enemy were passed, for we could not distinguish of what nation they were. Unable to answer,

I could only hasten with my ancient protector to the spot he had pointed out ; but our caution was of no effect. We were discovered by the foremost of the foldiers, three of whom dismounted to seize us, when the gallant Theodore, trembling with fury, drew a dagger, and plunged it in the shoulder of him who first laid hands upon me. Excuse a tear, Elfrida. Ah, how many are due to the fate of so noble, so valiant, so unfortunate, a hero ! How many have I since shed, when recollecting the look he cast upon me ! It was indeed a last look, for, before he could disengage the weapon, he was transfixed by a spear hurled at him from a chariot, and I could only exclaim, " Wretched Gunilda !" before

he

he was trod to death by the fiery horses.

“Roused almost to madness, I felt the fierceness of my disposition overpower the cold suggestions of prudence, and in a frantic tone bid them complete the horrid massacre, for in Gunilda they would find a victim worthy their diabolical rage. The murderer of Theodore leaped from his chariot, and came round to the spot on which I stood. I shrunk from him, though expecting the fatal blow, for the natural dread of death is not to be totally overcome by circumstances or situations, however shocking. The frantic emotions of despair may stop for a moment the sluices of that pity which, in a review of our calamities, generally

rally flow for ourselves; yet the stroke a mortified or indignant spirit may court appears not the less terrible when ready to fall upon the creature who tempts it, much less can it be divested of its horrors when attended by the pomp of war. I speak as a female, for doubtless the soldier, surrounded by death in various forms, has neither time or power for reflection. Elgarva shrieked for her mistress, just sinking under the death-dealing weapon. "Spare," she cried, "my royal lady; spare the sister of the mighty Sweyn." — "The sister of Denmark's king!" exclaimed a voice that roused every torpid sense, petrified as they were with the expectation of inevitable death. "Ah!" continued the fascinating speaker, "it is Gunilda, — my wife!"

wife!" O madam, in the destroyer of the ancient Theodore I beheld Raulin, the husband whom I had for ever given up; he for whom a generous old man had braved a tempestuous ocean;—he who, in return for services most essential, had unknowingly bestowed the reward of a bloody death. What a period was this for a discovery so tender, when every feeling had been condensed into one dreadful hope, that of bestowing the rites of burial upon the mortal ruins of a lost martyr to patriotism and treachery, for such I considered him. Thus, then, to meet him was exquisite agony,—painful delight. How complicated were my sensations! Love, anger, pity, sorrow, joy, all united their effects to bewilder a wild and weary brain, — to

drag

drag to the earth a fatigued emaciated body.

“ The appearance of another chief, whose attention was attracted by the scene before him, gave a fresh turn to my ideas ; and, in answer to his most respectful enquiries, relating to my sad situation, I was enabled to explain, though in faint and low accents, the cause of my presence in a place so inimical to my character. The stranger (whom I presently understood to be my husband's prisoner, but whose character had impressed his conqueror with a veneration equal to that he would have shewn even to Ethelred, and who bore only the name of captive, for such was Guiderius's dignity, — a dignity so sweetly attempered with graceful

graceful humility, that it was impossible to regulate his treatment by the cold and settled rules of prudence) warmly urged the necessity of conveying me to a place of safety. I looked upon Theodore's dishonored corpse, defiled with gore, and mangled by the continual plungings of the fiery horses, —then turned my humid and affrighted eyes upon the count. He understood me, and gave orders for the removal of the body, unfeignedly lamenting the fate of a man to whom we owed the highest obligations, and execrated the ardency of unchecked courage.

“The darkness of a tempestuous night no longer impressed my mind with those fears natural to a desolate state. I had found my husband, —

and

found him possessed of power and authority sufficient to shield me from danger, and cheerfully consented to visit in his society the Danish camp, situated upon a rising ground about two miles from us. I threw a mournful look upon the soldiers employed in the hasty and unceremonious interment of my ancient conductor, dropped a tear, and then, offering my hand to Raulin, we began our march through a dark and pathless wood, and soon gained an imperfect view of those fires kindled for signals to such stragglers who might have wandered in search of plunder beyond their knowledge, as well as to afford warmth to those advanced sentinels placed near the edge of the lines, and which a violent storm of rain rendered of little effect. It was with
some

some difficulty we reached my husband's tent, where every accommodation was profusely administered to refresh our weary limbs, and remove the excessive fatigue both mind and body had endured, as well as to restore and satisfy those appetites our foreboding hearts had nearly destroyed.

Three days of tranquillity had now passed, soft and light as the autumnal down when gently circulated by the undulating breeze; for, though a camp formed by heathens may convey an idea of tumultuous confusion, (where he was considered as the greatest hero whose ferocious attacks had secured to himself the largest share of honor, though the massacre of helpless infants, distracted matrons, or feeble age,

made up the sum of his barbarous exploits,) yet, under such a general as Raulin, order, decency, and regularity maintained a strict sway; and, while he gave proper encouragement to the truly valiant, all unnecessary acts of cruelty were punished with exemplary exactness. Here then I could,—nay, did enjoy peace, the more valuable as it arose from the very bosom of despair; nor was it interrupted but by the maternal remembrance of my lovely absent children, till the fourth morning, when, from the door of our tent I perceived an unusual commotion among our troops, while some were striking their tents, others loading themselves with baggage, and some flying with a velocity that indicated the most alarming danger. It was a bright
clear

clear day: the frost hung upon those bushes which had not been torn up for the purpose of making a military road, or to level the ground about the encampment, and the atmosphere was so refined as to admit of a boundless prospect.

“Terrified, without being able to affix a real cause, I kept an apprehensive eye upon the spot from whence I guessed arose the subject of this tumult. It was a rapid descent, cloathed on each side with vast and lofty trees, that over-hung a rugged rock, through which was cut a narrow irregular defile, where only two could pass at once; consequently it was but slightly guarded, from the idea that no mischief could possibly originate in a spot communicating with unfrequented

mountains, behind which lay an abrupt shore, edged with enormous rocks, whose bases were washed by the Irish sea. Added to my increasing fears was my husband's absence, who had marched that moment, in consequence of some intelligence he had gained from a spy, to reconnoitre the enemy's motions, and I doubted not but he had been betrayed by false pretences to quit the army, that he might fall an easy prey to the Britons, who could only hope by artful finessè to conquer a spirit that defied death itself in the open field. Alas! too fatally certain were my suspicions, for from the very quarter I had watched arose the danger I foreboded. The spy, who pretended a zealous attachment to the Danes, and the most inveterate hatred to your royal parent,

parent, had studied his part with the most consummate cunning, too deep, Elfrida, for the undesigning Raulin to undermine ; and by an artifice worthy only of the execrable head that planned it, a scheme was formed to deprive the noblest of his sex of peace, of glory, of freedom, and his wretched consort of a gallant husband.

“ Perhaps you guess already that Mercia’s duke is the subject of my indignation. Yes, madam, to him I owed the captivity of my protector. It was the first ill office he could do an unfortunate couple, — the first of those numberless crimes committed against one who had no otherwise injured him than the rules of honourable war might warrant. Unconscious of any sinister

design, the general admitted the treacherous tool of a pernicious villain, upon his first application, to his immediate confidence, and, with a bosom glowing with the hope of rendering his king an essential service, followed the wretch to an ambuscade within the before-mentioned wood, attended by only two soldiers, where he was surrounded by a party of Britons in a situation that made all resistance vain. Oh ! how did my ardent soul breathe forth vows and vague wishes for the appearance of him who never for a long and dismal period blessed these sorrowing eyes ; how eagerly did I hope his superior courage and skill might be successfully employed in escaping his ferocious enemies ; but, while forming delusive hopes and indulging wishes equally fruitless,

fruitless, I perceived that side of the woody declivity covered with British troops, emerging by enchantment, as it were, from the inmost gloom of the forest. Which way to go I knew not in an exigence so horrible. Deprived of their leader, and unassisted by those who cowardly fled, the bravest Danes were dismayed.

“Guilderius, in the midst of a confusion terrible enough to induce a temporary madness, flew to me, and swore by his Christian God to protect the wife of his friend. Faint, sick, and scarcely sensible of the distraction around me, I could only demand of him my husband; and it was then I learned the full extent of Edrie’s treachery. “Your husband is betrayed, lady,”

lady," said Guiderius. "Your countrymen's lives will soon be offered a sacrifice to their implacable enemy. Yonder army approaches with the intention of exterminating the very name of yon flying victims. Raulin is captured, but Edrie dares not gratify his malice by a premature death, but intends sending the noble general to Ethelred." This intelligence recalled my fleeting senses. — Raulin before Ethelred, at liberty to plead his cause ! — Oh, what sanguine hopes sprung from this consideration ! — Guiderius could possibly convey me to the British throne :—I had heard much of Ethelred. The cruelty imputable to that prince originated with his instrument only. On Edrie the stain of lawless oppression fell most heavy. It was not
the

the infliction of a king, but a tyrant in office, who, by a strain of lawless power, became both judge and executioner. Much then it imported that I might safely reach the metropolis, where the royal Briton held his court, and much did I depend upon that gentleness which I supposed could not resist the pleadings of a distressed matron. Thus, while hastening from the routed camp, were my thoughts employed; and, though surrounded by every object calculated to agonize the feelings of a woman, I felt an internal, an almost masculine strength supplied by the fervor of connubial affection. It was near noon before we could dare to slacken a pace which terror had kept up; but, upon entering a lane sheltered by thick hedges, and far from

the military road on which the Britons were continually marching, we ventured to stop, a large spreading oak offering its branches to canopy the heads of two helpless wanderers, while our generous friend left us to explore a distant cottage, in the hope at least of procuring some milk and bread.

“ My poor Elgarva, timid by nature, with no object in view but her deliverance from the dangers that surrounded us, dreaded the arrival of the Britons in every trifling noise, and anxiously entreated I would shape my course to the sea-side, where chance might offer some conveyance to carry her to Denmark. Alas, I as well as Elgarva had strong and tender incitements to leave this unpropitious isle.

The

The idea of my helpless children rushed at this awful moment upon my remembrance, and I felt my inclinations suspended as it were between the conjugal and maternal ties. The stillness of our present situation, the solitude of a strange enclosed country, gave additional force to these painful reflections, and we were discovered by Guiderius in the practice of the deepest dejection. I was somewhat alarmed at his approach, for he was not alone; but I soon discovered in the countenance of his companion so much humanity, simplicity, and kind curiosity, that my fears presently gave way to a confidential expectation of finding in this woman the relief necessity made so desirable. She accosted us in a pleasing and modest manner. Our conductor

G 5 explained

explained her desire of accommodating us with a plain and homely repast. We followed her silently and thankfully. Upon our entrance, I was immediately supplied with a pair of sandals, my own having given way to the sharp stones which, during my last hour's travel, had cut my feet so as to occasion the most exquisite anguish. Guiderius now proposed to return, if he could with safety, for some certain intelligence respecting the army. It was with much reluctance I parted with him, though he expressly engaged to be back by the next morning, by which time he thought we might be sufficiently rested to pursue our journey.

“The

“ The good woman now produced her plain and simple hoard : it consisted of cream, apples, bread, and cyder, with nuts, and several sorts of the latest autumnal fruits preserved in the freshest manner; not forgetting to press us in the kindest tone to partake of what was before us, —proving, in this instance, how little necessity there is to use a multitude of words when the heart dictates the most friendly actions. Language was of no use; and, though my understanding could not comprehend her words, my heart took in the full meaning of what she said, and the tear she shed, while changing my sandals and applying some simple emollients to my wounded feet, was a balm to my corroded feelings. Observing we shuddered from the extre-

mity of the cold, she loaded her hearth with fuel, and in the warm and refreshing blaze I read the liberality of her bounteous soul, while the ready and respectful attention she shewed proved she was not ignorant of the quality of her guests. But ah! ambition had lost its consequence with me. Distress, and the evils I had combated with, and which now stood in black perspective before me, stifled, if they had not totally destroyed, the turbulent passion" —————

Fatigue and recollected sorrow now interrupted the unhappy lady's narrative, while Elfrida's gentlest sympathy, a tribute constantly paid by delicate sensibility, would not suffer her to finish a story so interesting to herself

self till she had taken some necessary repose. Athela felt the tenderness of her behaviour, and lifted up her hands and eyes in silent thankfulness to the God whose power she had so lately acknowledged, and whose goodness she so fully experienced in granting her the acquisition of such a friend; and while the princess left her to seek that information from which she might, perhaps, adduce increasing misery, the countess attempted to lose the remembrance of past afflictions in the sad contemplation of those before her, so true it is that we are ever alive to the past and the future, while the present moment, which is all of our lives we can enjoy, is suffered to escape before we can be sensible of its importance.

The

The abbess, to whom Elfrida applied for her opinion respecting the present confusion, fully assured her that the protection of their enemies would by no means ensure their safety; and though, as she might perceive, they were yet safe from the ravages of a Pagan foe, it could not be supposed they would long enjoy the tranquillity of peace, while even their sacred roof sheltered one, to rescue whom the utmost force would be employed; and though Morcar, for what reason she knew not, had promised to preserve the most active of their persecutors, yet the noble duke, under whose auspices they enjoyed such unmolested freedom, would no longer countenance their misapplied tenderness to savage invaders. Elfrida shuddered at this representation.

presentation. The name of Mercia carried foreboding mischief in the sound, and she trembled to think Athela was indebted to one of his servile dependants for a precarious asylum. She left the irritated superior, and once more visited the battlement to satisfy herself that the horrors of war no longer threatened them with an immediate destruction. The stillness of all around her, the softness of the air, the brightness of the sun, darting its rays upon the ivy which crept between the loose stones and insinuated itself into the chasms deserted by the mouldering cement, impressed her mind with ideas of a more lively turn, and she began to conceive it possible that even happiness might once more be the lot of her revered Athela. She
could

could not help deeply reflecting upon those misfortunes which owed their birth to the dignity, which in the ambitious bosom formed such an essential part of its hopes and wishes, and silently decided with self complacency on the life herself had chosen, which, though it struck at the root of the most exalted expectations, left a repose upon the mind too desirable in her estimation to be exchanged for the possession of wordly grandeur or the claims of princely power. Thus at peace with herself, and a soul undisturbed by the idea of any future ill, she quitted the pleasing scene around her for an employ not less suited to her benevolence,—that of rendering every consolation to the lovely countess.

In

In her passage along a broken terrace, which covered the fragments of several rude arches that were supported against the side of the building, she was induced, by a sudden noise below, to venture to the edge of the kerbstones, when, looking downwards, she beheld, attended by several armed servants, the duke of Mercia. His helmet was bruised, the feathers that had adorned it were partly torn away, and the rest hung in wild disorder over his forehead. His armour, deeply indented with various cuts, and disfigured with blood and dust, presented an appearance which put to flight all the tranquil sensations of Elfrida's peaceful bosom. An involuntary exclamation exposed her to the duke. He cast his eye to the spot where she stood.

It

It was enough. She left the place agitated with a thousand fears, and hastened to the hall, in hope of reaching Athela's apartment, which lay on the other side of the building, before the duke could enter; but the abbess, who was hurrying out to meet him, took her hand, and endeavoured to lead her that way. Gasping almost for breath at the reflection of Athela's danger, should her residence be made known, Elfrida entreated the superior to conceal the unfortunate Dane from her bitterest enemy; but to this petition she turned a cold and inattentive ear, "said her duty to her lord demanded the utmost exertion of her power to oblige him; that she could not answer it to herself, nor was she competent to the practice of a hypocriſy

pocrify so culpable as to support or protect a woman for whose sake all Britain might suffer: but one thing she would venture to promise, if the princess, who had interrupted her with the most affecting entreaties for her secrecy, would receive the duke with the tender compassion his situation demanded, she would endeavour for that evening to forbear disclosing to him an information so important."——

Tender compassion! — what mystical words! Elfrida was stunned. Had she stipulated for reverence, humility, or obedience to the haughty claims of pride, they might, for the sake of the illustrious sufferer, have been granted. nor would she have refused an actual acknowledgment of his power to have obtained his favor for her friend; but

to

to a compassionate tenderness she could not bend. Her whole soul militated against a behaviour so inimical to the virgin delicacy that blushed even at the request.

The abbess saw the conflict, and artfully took advantage of her confusion, for to her was known the duke's intentions respecting the princess. Quitting therefore the hand she had held till then, and motioning to depart, "You, madam, are to do as you please. The only method to prevail with me is to accede to my plan,—and see our noble lord approaches." Elfrida could not speak. Fear, love, and hatred, so occupied her bosom, that she dreaded to articulate a word, left

the conflict of those various passions should discover the secret she supposed the abbess would soon explain.

Edrie, with a condescension that sat awkwardly upon him, felicitated her upon their escape from the Danes, who had invaded his palace, and carried off the hostages, whom he yet hoped to recover, assuring her that they had already gained a glorious victory over them, and he doubted not before the following evening not one would be left to tell the disastrous fate of their companions. "You are," added he, "a subject of parental fear to the king. He sends by me to prepare your return to court. Scenes, such as war presents, may be supposed to come so near as to wound your gentleness. He

therefore has provided a lonely and sacred retreat, where your purity will not be sullied by gross recapitulations of Danish excesses, nor your softness hurt by a view of that necessary severity a hardened enemy deserves." The silence which succeeded intelligence so unwelcome to Elfrida, was not likely to be broken by the abbess, who in that lady's absence saw all those ambitious hopes her presence had supported sink in irretrievable obscurity, nor could she venture to express her disapprobation of Ethelred's intention, communicated as it was by an arbitrary despot. Her usual cunning was inadequate to the power of warding off a blow so unexpected, and she betrayed a confused perplexity in her manner which nothing but the respect she

she was supposed to owe the princess could possibly account for. To disclose the important secret of Athela's retreat promised no help to the cause of her trouble, as Elfrida's perfect detestation must follow an act so atrocious, and she would undoubtedly accede to a request which included her speedy departure from St. Frideswald. Unable then at the moment to offer such reasons against the king's command as should be even in his and the duke's estimation conclusive, she waited in anxious suspense the answer of her royal boarder, who found a thousand objections arise in her perturbed mind against a scheme that must totally overthrow those she had formed for the safe establishment of her friend, whose danger was too evident if left

with the abbess, and to secure whom against Streou's power would be absolutely impossible ; nor could she bear to put herself under the protection of one whom she already despised, whose views in respect to herself were clearly unequivocal, and his influence over Ethelred too well known to admit the smallest hope of opposing his wishes, though the happiness of a beloved daughter was sure to be a sacrifice to his unbounded insolence.

The duke, amazed at a reception so inimical to the claims his proud heart demanded, could attend no longer with patience a decision he plainly perceived when made would not accord with his intentions, and abruptly left the room to the two ladies.

dies. Elfrida burst into tears. The abbess saw with joy her reluctance to leave the monastery, and determined to wait the issue of the afflicted virgin's meditation, and was about to follow the duke when Elfrida once more supplicated her not to discover the noble Dane. Policy induced the superior to soften her former refusal, and she inwardly rejoiced at the effect of her placability, as she immediately received a solemn assurance from Elfrida that she would not quit the monastery while there was the least hope of remaining in a situation so desirable, who, when Algitha was departed, appealed to the holy virgin for her assistance in an exigence so cruel, and vowing a pilgrimage to a small chapel dedicated to her among the

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wild hills of Cambria, if she would exert that power in her favour so readily ascribed to her by the innocent enthusiast, and then with a beating heart and trembling feet repaired to the apartment of her devoted friend, who was ignorant of the arrival of her implacable foe; and rising from the couch on which she had vainly strove to lull the sorrows of her soul, gratefully received the apprehensive lady, who cautiously closed the door lest the playful unconsciousness of Athela's little ones should reach the only person who could behold unmoved their defenceless situation.

"I see," said the countess, with a heavy sigh, "the imprudence of confiding my sad story to your gentleness.

The

The excessive sensibility of your soul
 portrays itself in every lovely feature.
 You tremble, madam. I feel the im-
 propriety of a conduct the more re-
 prehensible as it exhibits a selfishness
 not to be excused, though, alas, too
 common in a world that judges with
 blameable partiality where its own mis-
 fortunes take the lead, to the exten-
 sion of a recapitulation of woes per-
 haps superior to those it aims to im-
 print on the feeling heart. Let me
 then bury in oblivion the conclusion
 of a tale that can scarcely boast even
 the variety of misery." "Not so,
 lady. My impatience to hear your
 vast affliction is surely as blameable as
 the fancied selfishness you speak of.
 Proceed then. We have yet an hour's
 leisure. The declining sun marks in

just proportion our time, and by the lengthening shadow of yonder ruin detached from this building, I guess you have opportunity, ere the bell begins, still deeper to ground my hatred of Edrie Streou."

The princess shuddered as she concluded her request. "Ah!" she thought, "who knows if another sun shall rise before vengeance strikes its iron fang into that noble bosom? Who knows but these playful innocents may suffer the fate of their guilty countrymen. Alas, their tender mother sees not the cloud that perhaps even now is bursting, and will shed the last drops of its noxious venom on her sacred head." Thus did she anticipate the shocking evils of a fate
little

little less than a miracle could alter, while the countess, ignorant of the agonizing fears of her auditor, applied herself to the purpose of concluding her narrative.

“ The friendly creature, who, with the compassion of an angel, had so liberally tendered her little all to remove our wants, now pointed to a homely couch in the corner of the room, and then, with a countenance beaming with the benevolent consciousness of having rendered an essential service to helpless distress, sat down to her wheel, and in the dialect of her country chaunted in a low tone some stanzas of a song with tolerable sweetness. Algarva gladly took possession of the humble bed, and soon gave

way to the effects of bodily fatigue, while her unhappy mistress, though equally wearied, experienced the impossibility of enjoying that repose her mental sufferings denied. How did I wish to shake off the trammels of greatness ! How gladly would I have given up all claim to dignity and title for the situation our hospitable landlady so worthily and usefully filled up ! Alas, if I looked with an eye of envy upon a harmless woman, might not the pangs of my soul plead excuse for the narrow passion ? Was not she in possession of every valuable I was in danger of losing ? Surrounded by several sprightly children, blessed with hardy health and uncontested liberty, most likely waiting too in cheerful expectation of a faithful companion, at least

least if I might judge from her frequently lifting up the wooden latch, standing some minutes at the door, and then returning with a tender dejection in her looks, which the innocent actions of her infants would readily remove, and the gaiety of her countenance immediately return,—no fear of hostile depredation, for wasting war had already passed her cottage, too slowly to invite the lawless spoiler, who had not yet practised the wanton exertion of their dreadful power upon happiness so humble. “Alas! how incomparably charming is her lot,” I softly cried, “to that which fills my heart with pain, my eyes with tears. If she never felt the supreme gratification of refined affection, neither has she experienced the bitter reverse. If her part-

ner glitters not in the sunshine of royalty, neither is he by his exaltation exposed to the horrible tempest of war, ambition, or revenge. The storm that tears its boasted honors from the uplifted head of haughty prosperity sings in the wind, but flies over his little hut harmless, and scorns a prey so feeble. The deluge that destroys every tint of beauty in the gaudy tulip does but refresh the hardy plant." Thus hastily did I conclude, because these poor cottagers had hitherto escaped the destruction which sooner or later is the common consequence where ruinous war has pitched its hostile tents.

"These mournful cogitations were interrupted by a joyful exclamation from the children, while the mother, roused

roused by a well-known footstep, ran to the door, and gladly received her husband. He started back upon seeing the little couch occupied by strangers, and said something with evident eagerness to his wife. She shook her head, and readily gave him such information as converted his look of suspicion into the deepest respect. I arose from the pallet, and was placed by the fire, which the good hostess replenished, and prepared an humble supper, to which I was earnestly invited; but, added to every other pang, I now collected from the man's joyful exclamations and tone of voice, that victory had declared for the Britons, as I could make out a word here and there sufficient to confirm my fears. Another object of terror too struck to my

wounded soul. Guiderius had doubtless forsaken us. Could he possibly bestow a thought upon two unhappy women who had only him of all mankind whose protection could be of service, and who would doubtless wish to make the most of that liberty he had so unexpectedly obtained?

"Sick, then, with a thousand forebodings, I gently refused their hospitable invitation to partake the rural meal, and gave myself up to the most horrible dejection, sitting the pale lifeless image of despair, when the trampling of horses called every torpid sense into action, and I could not help exclaiming "He comes! my deliverer, the benevolent Guiderius, comes!" The door was thrown open with violence:

lence : my poor protectors shook with fear. A warrior advanced, stern, ferocious, covered with blood. Alas ! it was not my devoted Raulin, — it was not the generous friend : — it was, O lady, it was the bane of all my peace. Can you not already guess that Edric Streou stood before me ? Ah me, I knew him not. I had never seen the tyrant, but he announced himself. — “ The duke of Mercia, madam,” he said, “ offers those services you claimed from the traitor Guiderius, possessed of more power, and it may be of a better will to assist you. I may yet be deficient in courtly language, but the event shall contradict every prejudice you may imbibe in my disfavor ;” and then, turning to the petrified rustics, he seemed to check them.

for the ready assistance they had accorded, while, conscious of their imputed guilt, they gradually retreated from his presence, and I stood without one kind friend to plead my cause, my eye cast towards the couch where Algarva yet was wrapt in sleep.

"You will do well, madam," continued the duke, "to awaken your servant, and leave a residence unworthy the sister of a king." Still I could not speak, though panting for the intelligence I dreaded to hear; for had he not called Guiderius a traitor, and was not Guiderius my protector?—"I see," he added, "you distrust me. You think me an enemy to your country. True; but I am none to your person. What think you of being re-

stored

stored to your husband? He is gone to London, whither if you choose I can conduct you. My power is great. Trust then the governor of a king. Trust, O Elfrida ——” My husband had trusted, too fatally trusted, and was deceived. But what could I do, a helpless female, unable through terror and fatigue even to deprecate the fate I saw ready to overwhelm me; the prospect was dreadful, and but for one glimmering ray which illumined a feeble hope, I must have sunk in utter despair. If Raulin was in London, I might again behold him: that was the prop of a sinking soul. I advanced to the couch, awakened Algarva, and with trembling feet was supported by Edrie to the door, who, placing us in a chariot himself had occupied,

cupied, we quitted the silent refuge of harmless poverty, in all the sad forebodings of future evil.

Our ferocious attendants, unawed even by the presence of their tremendous general, made several little excursions during a journey which was long and painful, among the cottages scattered on the wastes and heaths, and committing the most unjustifiable depredations upon such of the Danes whose appearance of property seemed to promise some advantage. Alas, what scenes were these for feminine delicacy to witness! Algarva wept incessantly, while my burning brain denied the welcome moisture; a stupor possessed every faculty, and the forced complacency of our conductor passed equally

equally unnoticed with the rude occasional turbulence of his soldiers.

"After two days march, we reached the confines of Mercia, and with horror not to be described, I entered the magnificent prison you beheld me in. The lofty hall, stately bed-chambers, and noble gallery, brought to my weakened remembrance the palace of my ancestors. Memory again with ingenious cruelty renewed past sorrows, quickened present woes, and opened a sad view of troubles in perspective, while, with a well-assumed softness, the duke congratulated me upon my safe arrival. In answer to his professions of rendering me the most essential services, I conjured him to bring me to my husband,—¹ that done, my lord, I shall then

then credit your lavish vows of friendship." He paused, looked perplexed, irresolute, and confused, as though loth to communicate intelligence of disagreeable import. I shuddered, and fixed an eye of anxious expectation on his varying countenance. "What arrow," I exclaimed, "have you yet in store to wound my peace. Say, am I to be a prisoner for life in this gloomy mansion? Has Raulin paid with his blood the tribute too often exacted by barbarous tyranny from exalted merit, and is his wretched widow doomed to drag the chain of a tedious existence through years of slavery, nor feel one pang allayed by the presence of her lovely offspring?" He stopped me,—“ Ah, madam, those children, so laudably dear to you, — suppose,”

and

and he hesitated, "suppose you should see them no more:—suppose through my means you should see them again."

— Oh, how this mysterious address racked my soul! I could not utter the agonizing fears that shook my bosom. The artful monster saw and enjoyed my distress. He went on.—

"Perhaps those unprotected defenceless little ones are,—I say perhaps—"

"Ah! what means this conduct?" I cried. "What of my children? Who says they are defenceless? who says they are in danger? Are they not under the immediate eye of their uncle? Would he admit a possibility of their being ill treated? The duke looked incredulous. "Have you, madam," he said, "any cogent reason for trusting your brother with Raulin's descendants."

dants. Report says he has not forgiven the fancied degradation of his royal house in the choice you made of a husband. Be advised : send for your children. Here they will be safe. Under a mother's watchful eye, what can harm them ? Do you not wish to see them well and happy ? Does not your heart linger on the precious hope of again embracing them ? Would not your happiness be rendered complete by the presence of their beloved parent ? Fancy for a moment you see him surrounded by your beloved infants : listen to the rapturous expression of love and paternal tenderness. It is in my power, lady, to realize scenes the very mention of which illumines your countenance with rapturous delight." ——" Send for them !

Oh

Oh what a charming permission! Yes, gracious duke, I will immediately avail myself of your bounteous indulgence." Here then," he cried, "sign this paper, in which Ethelred, upon the condition of resigning your little ones to the protection of our court, engages to cease hostilities against your country; but, on the contrary, if you refuse, the consequence will be utter destruction to every Dane who shall ever after be found upon this island." I tremblingly exclaimed, "What, then, are my children to become hostages? Confined, perhaps, with their unfortunate parents, they may too late lament the sad credulity which precipitates them into ruin." "Vain foolish woman," said Edric, with a frowning brow, "know you not they are now under the most slavish subjection?

I tell you they are at present under the heaviest bondage. I mean not to alarm your maternal fears, but it becomes indispensably necessary to inform you of Sweyn's implied determination, from a confession that lately escaped his lips; that as, from his queen's being childless, he was deprived of the hope of reigning hereafter in the person of his own offspring, he would stick at nothing to prevent the sceptre of Denmark from falling into the hands of his enemy, for such he should ever consider the man who had basely practised upon his sister's credulity."

I groaned an interruption to this shocking intelligence. "Spare me, my lord," I exclaimed; "spare a poor creature the dreadful apprehensions of

her

her children's ruin. Cruel Sweyn, what hast thou resolved against those helpless innocents! — but it cannot be. Sweyn may resent, but he dare not destroy. No, your king shall not extirpate a race so hateful to this nation.” “Obstinate Dane, you see not the mischief you are precipitating upon your family. Your husband, convinced of our sincerity, has already given his sanction to the only step on which he justly grounds his hope of liberty. Once more I tender the paper. He would have signed it, but conscious of your brother's dislike, imagined it would be of no effect; nor are we certain even your request will be acceded to, but it is worth a trial.”

Alas,

Alas, one moment's consideration would have shewn me the fallacy of these pretences; was it probable that a man, who was pursuing our unfortunate countrymen to the most complete destruction, should feel such pity for a few individuals as to promote a plan for their safety; — a man too whose duplicity had already been so apparent. Why send for those babes, if he meant to liberate their parents? Why not restore my husband to me, and convey us to Denmark by such means as might most readily occur? or, if induced by this sudden touch of pity, he feared to deliver us into my brother's hands, why not procure us a passage to Gallia, where we might have lived free from the dread of assassination? — but, blinded by the eager desire I felt to

embrace my children, and overcome by the plausibility of a tale calculated only to impose upon a heart swelling with every tender affection, I cast up a look to the heavens, in which I impiously imagined the guardian Gods of Denmark reigned; and, after a short ejaculation to those fancied deities, complied with the duke's request.

I have since recollected the malignant triumph that flushed his features when I delivered back the papers, and with what trembling haste he caught them from me, saying, "You have done well, madam. Expect soon to see your husband and children in this palace, where you may enjoy every privilege your state requires, — till Ethelred has finished the conquest of those

those rebellious Danes who yet may not accede to the whole of our plan, and are scattered upon this island."

"He then left me, and Oh what rapturous expectations did I indulge ! Alive to every sweet hope, I rambled about the wild and spacious environs of that noble habitation, and bore with tolerable patience the time that must intervene before I could see my children ; but, when the transporting moment arrived, and I beheld —— O lady, the scene becomes too painful for my exhausted feelings, — it was more than extacy, it was more than thought can imagine or pen delineate. After apprehensions so poignant, sorrow so excessive, fatigues so inimical to female delicacy, after being involved in
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the horrors of war, and witness to the calamities inflicted by an undisciplined army, — what must be my sensations to see, to embrace a lovely family, from which I had been so long estranged ! Yet, yet I feel their little arms entwining my neck, yet do I feel their crimson cheeks pressing my happy bosom, and yet do I remember the tear that trickled from the maternal eye, and mixed with the infantine drops that bedewed their faces.

“ And here, upon this enchanting recollection, I ought to pause for what have I since experienced, — but passions the most opposite to those which then warmed my heart. How true it is, that the human mind, ever grasping at distant objects, feels unsatisfied

while any one remains in view to which it reaches. It is certain that the acquisition immediately before us occupies every idea, nor till that is attained do we see those numberless others which fill the perspective. And thus it was with me. The possession of my children once attained, and myself out of the reach of disappointment, I then adverted to my husband's situation, and with inexpressible concern began to feel myself a prisoner. What I at first conceived to be a mark of respect, I too soon found was grounded on a suspicion I might wish to escape, and the numerous attendants who followed us every where were in fact no other than our guards.

“ Now

“ Now then sorrow and suspicion pervaded my soul. I enquired for the duke. He was absent. I then endeavoured to sound those who were more immediately about me respecting my husband's fate. They pleaded ignorance, and in the cruellest uncertainty I continued till the ensuing autumn, knowing nothing which occurred beyond the palace gates. The whole world seemed shut out. One same round of amusements and employments marked each revolving day, but diverted not my mind from the contemplation of present captivity and future woes, for too late I lamented the sanction given to my children's imprisonment, as it now occurred to my affrighted imagination they were betrayed hither for the purpose of rendering

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dering Ethelred's vengeance more complete.

“ Thus desponding, foreboding, and pierced with unavailing regret, I passed the summer, and saw the approaching autumn without once beholding or hearing from my treacherous goaler. It was now the middle of October. The limes and poplars presented only naked branches, though the majestic oaks retained their verdure. The days were short, but serenely pleasing, and the sky, often without a cloud, was tinged with a lovely blue. It was upon one of those temperately cheerful days I wandered to a wood near the bottom of an eminence, a considerable way from the palace, guarded at a respectful distance by my usual attendants.

tendants. Pensive and unhappy, I heeded not the hours, and had descended half way down the hill, heedless of any danger, though the servants were not in sight, a circumstance which my present situation made peculiarly welcome; and, seating myself upon the root of a tree which crossed the path exactly opposite a large and deep cavern, I tuned a small lute that hung before me, and began a melancholy strain, the tears accompanying my mournful song. It was composed by a noble dame, whose husband had fallen in one of those battles between the Danes and Britons in Arthur's days, and was, though ancient, much valued upon account of her who had invented it.

“The vast hill before me, the cavern, the broad and deep valley beneath, contributed to form an echo so distinct and so often repeated, that I was charmed with the effect, and continued the music for the sake of the reverberation, listening at every pause to the successive notes, which seemed to receive additional sweetness from the clear repetitions. A solemn silence ensued after the echo ceased. Not a breath waved the declining woods, which almost covered the mouth of the cavern. Every scene of distress I had endured passed slowly through my mind, and I was losing myself in painful meditation, when a voice, soft yet manly, took up the last stanza I had sung, altering in some degree the sense of it, and in the most confused astonishment

astonishment I listened to the following words :

Again, fair dame, renew the dirge-like strain,
Ah, let thy lute and voice be heard again !

“ I trembled with apprehension, terror, and delight. The voice was not unknown, but I could not ascertain the identity of it. I looked fearfully round. My guards were not in sight, and I ventured in low accents to repeat the whole verse.

For ever cease the dirge-like strain,
Nor lute nor voice be heard again.
Yes,—I will cease in simple lays
To swell the cheerful note of praise,
Since gallant Claud no more can hear
The strain of love, or view the tear
Which dims his widow'd Emma's eyes,
While sorrow bursts in tort'ring sighs.
Then cease, for ever cease the dirge-like strain,
Nor tuneful lute nor voice be heard again.

“ I had scarcely concluded, when I beheld a man habited like an harper descend into the valley from the cavern, and take a path which led to my seat. O lady, what painful throbs impelled my heart ! Alas, I wished more than dreaded an interview with a person whose dress was evidently intended as a disguise to his noble figure. He approached with a fearful hesitating step, looking about as if he sought to elude the vigilance of an enemy. His face was partly hid by a bandage, but, when he came nearer, I joyfully uttered to myself, “ It is Guiderius, generous faithful Guiderius ! Alas, he will be taken ! ” and I hastily arose, and, going towards him, said, in a hurried tone, “ Be gone ! You cannot assist the imprisoned Gunilda. Oh be gone ! ”

gone ! Yonder hill covers my watchful guards, and see they advance with speed." " Do not," he said, " command me from you. Follow me, and you may escape." " Oh not for worlds !" I cried. " What, leave my children !" He would have caught me in his arms. I resisted the freedom. Again he would have embraced me. Was this consistent with the delicacy of a hero ? I struggled.— " What madness," said he ; " your children are safe," and again he strove to force me down the hill. " Ah, trust me, lady. I am your true, your real friend." Alas, was that a proof of it ? Did not his conduct look more like the effect of ill-concealed passion ? Surely I thought so, or would I have screamed for help. My guards rushed

upon the pretended harper, but oh how my soul sickened when I beheld him in their hands. Clasping my fingers, and weeping, I exclaimed, "Oh! what have I done? I have brought ruin on one who would have been my deliverer. "Infatuated woman," said he, "you have indeed! Behold the man you have betrayed!" He lifted up the bandage from his eyes. I shrieked with vehemence: I tore my hair, threw myself upon the ground, execrated the gods who could suffer me to commit an act so atrocious, — and then, rising with a frantic air, threw myself into, — ah, Madam! — into my husband's arms! —

"He spoke in the Danish language.

"I forgive your ill-timed delicacy. Alas,

las, Gunilda, how have you defeated my brightest hopes ! Success crowned my attempts to escape a long and rigorous confinement. I had, by the noble Guiderius's means, provided a vessel for our escape, and chose to come myself to rescue you from your prison. Hearing you sing, I knew the voice, and responded to it, in hopes mine would be as speedily recognized by you, and thought it the safest method of discovery ; but, when I found you knew me not, I would not venture to make myself known at such a dangerous juncture, nothing doubting but you would be happy to fly, though with a stranger. But now," and a tear dropped from his eye upon my cheek, "now I have only the consolation of knowing we shall suffer together.—But

what meant my unfortunate love when she mentioned our little ones? They at least are safe from danger with your royal brother." Alas, I could not answer; for how could I say that through my credulous rashness they were equally wretched; and now our guards, who concluded from our mournful gestures that we were no strangers, interfered, and conducted us in silent anguish to the palace.

"To describe the heart-rending agonizing interview which distracted my soul, — the sad and melancholy meeting between my husband and our sweet babes, would only rack your gentle bosom, and protract the conclusion of a narrative which yet teems with another direful event.

"The

“The night succeeding this painful discovery brought no consolation with it, nor could I one moment lose the remembrance of my fatal mistake.— Raulin was removed to the other wing of the palace, a cruel blow, against which it was in vain to contend; and I could see him taken from me, in all the horrør of ineffectual tears and lamentations, without a possibility of present redress; but how was I shocked, when, in answer to my request once again to see the stranger, I was informed it could not be till their lord arrived, to whom they had sent an express the evening before. Oh! how this intelligence blackened every prospect of deliverance! Stupified with excessive grief, I retired in a state of insensibility, and, unconscious of what had

had happened, asked repeatedly of poor Algarva for her lord, and sung the couplet which had proved so fatal for my wandering mind, though incapable of assorting those ideas which fluctuated in my disordered brain, yet dwelt upon the preceding transaction without that keenness of misery which a perfect recollection must have induced; and it was not till three days had elapsed that the powers of reflection were restored,—restored only to be exercised with more poignant sorrows.

“ It was near the evening of the fourth day, when, from the unusual hurry and preparations among the servants, I concluded our tyrant was arrived, or near at hand; and soon his tremendous voice met my ear in his way

way to my apartment. Though weak from indisposition of body and mind, I determined to exert that native dignity which of late had subsided in listless inattention, and, when he entered with a gloomy and ferocious aspect, I collected my spirits, and prepared to meet his reproaches with an undaunted calmness. He shrunk from my visible superiority, and doubtless felt in that moment how much a little mind can be debased, though in the most exalted situation, by reflection on its own vileness, and consequently was abashed and humiliated in the presence of an offended innocent woman, equal if not above himself in birth and real greatness.

“ I spoke not, but waited till the rancour which worked up from his guilty heart had formed itself into words, and fixed a steady eye upon his perturbed countenance. At length, collecting resolution from the sad certainty that we were wholly in his power, he assumed his usual confidence, and, coming towards me, “ You have doubtless, madam, resolution sufficient to hear the issue of a fate which a distrust of him who meant to prove himself your real friend has undoubtedly precipitated. The ill-timed rashness of your husband in corrupting that arch-deceiver Guiderius, who shall lament in bonds his enthusiastic notions of friendship, added to your late attempt to leave England with a stranger, has united to produce the most
lasting

lasting resentment in the bosom of our king. You have, therefore, only one alternative, — to give up the name of him who would have seduced you from hence, and cheerfully consent to remain with your children as hostages till the difference is accommodated between Britain and Denmark, or be separated for life from those children whose interest we think will induce you to submit to Ethelred's commands."

"O lady, how powerful are those ligaments that attach us to the dear objects of maternal affection! It has been disputed whether connubial love bears equal sway in the human bosom, — a question I believe no one can truly decide, even when under the immediate dread of tearing asunder
one

one or other of those precious ties. Alas, how complexed, confused, and rapid, were my ideas while the haughty tyrant was delivering his message, or rather his own cruel will! It was plain, by the word *stranger*, he knew not his noble adversary was under his roof, — that he had not yet beheld the man whose capture would have delighted his soul; but he must soon discover him, and then what would avail my concealment but to provoke the monster to deprive me of every gleam of comfort. As to my chearful acquiescence to become a hostage with my little ones, I was already a prisoner. Would not then my concurrence procure me better terms and more freedom?—

“The

“The duke, artful and designing, waited patiently the effect of these cogitations, and heard with visible joy my resolution to continue without any further attempt to emancipate myself and little ones. “Now then, madam, it only remains to know the name of him whose presence occasioned such extraordinary perturbation. I have not yet questioned him, but wait your information, as my domestics inform me he is so extremely fullen as even to refuse proper sustenance.” A sigh burst from my bosom, cold sweats bedewed my forehead. The discovery he urged seemed to threaten every horrid consequence, and yet I could not suppose my taciturnity would procure the smallest consideration. “You do not speak,” he said. “It cannot be he, after setting
setting

setting your husband free, who is by this time in Denmark, hastened over to the continent!" — "Why, my lord, do you urge me thus?" I answered. "Cannot your eyes identify the unfortunate prisoner?" "They shall then, madam," said he, in an angry tone, and was retiring. "But remember, you have acceded only to half of Ethelred's commands." I trembled.—"Ah, my lord, know you not my noble husband is your captive?" — Joy flushed from his eyes. "Why," I continued, "was it necessary for me to pronounce his doom!" O the malignant smile that darkened rather than illumined his features! — "Thanks, noble dame, for this most pleasing intelligence;" and then resuming his usual sternness, "I have for
more

more than an hour been interrogating the saucy slave, but he was obstinately silent. Thanks then I repeat to Gu-nilda for her welcome frankness."——

"What, then," I cried, convulsed with agony, "you knew him not.—It cannot be!—Has he not been your prisoner before?"—"Most certainly. But the same obstinacy which now denies the faculty of speech made him then conceal his face from me; for, when he was first brought before me, his beaver was down, and the ingenious deceit we had practised irritated him so much, that he turned in rude scorn from me, and during my stay in London I saw him not; so that, had you not been thus generously open, I should most probably have sent him under a slight guard to London, from
whose

whose vigilance he might again have escaped." — "Powers of revenge," I cried; "Ah, vindictive Thor, is it thou that actuates this inhuman monster to triumph in the spoils of his diabolical wickedness? Is it thou who misleads a wretched woman to decide the fate of her injured husband and his helpless offspring? Twice have they been betrayed by me, — me who would have borne the most poignant misery to preserve life and freedom to the dearer part of my existence; — me, whose comfort, peace, and happiness center in their glory and safety. Ah! sweet babes, execrate the parent to whom you owe so large a portion of sorrow, and join with your ruined father to detest the author of this complete destruction." —

O madam, my piercing complaints were uttered in vain. No ear but that of infantine tenderness witnessed the effusions of my grief.

“The duke staid not to answer my just reproaches, but hastened to exult over the sorrows of affronted greatness. Towards evening he again entered the apartment I occupied. The rattle of chains along the gallery awakened me from the stupor of grief. I saw my gaoler approach. The noise of some one following him induced me to turn my eye to the door; but who can judge of my feelings when I beheld my husband strongly fettered. His brows, drawn together with an expression of rage mingled with fullen despair, and the look he cast upon me were indescribably

indescribably terrible. I threw myself
 on my knees before him, raised my
 clasped fingers, the tears rushing in
 torrents from my eyes, "Forgive me,
 ah, dear abused husband of my love !
 Unknowingly have I betrayed thee :
 unknowingly have I prepared these
 chains for thy warlike limbs. Oh let
 me share the ignominious load !" —
 Alas, Elfrida, my submission was re-
 ceived with scorn. He flung me from
 him. "Be gone, rash infatuated wo-
 man," he cried. "Too plainly appear
 the motives for thy horrid treatment.
 Raulin in chains cannot revenge the
 disgrace thou hast brought upon his
 honor. I thought thee innocent. I
 imagined the delicacy of thy sex had
 induced thee to refuse my assistance
 when I would have taken thee from
 hence.

hence. I knew not that an attachment to this enemy of our nation had blinded thee to a husband's injuries. Be gone then, and suffer me to bear in peace the fetters thy cruelty has imposed."——A scalding tear wetted his cheek, as he turned indignantly from me, who was incapable of denying a charge so base and infamous,

"Come," said the duke, "you see she cannot refute the allegation. Leave her then to the man who deserves the sacrifice she has made. It remains for me to supply your loss." O madam, can you wonder at the consequence of this tyrant's baseness? He wore a small dagger in his belt. Horror, madness, hatred,—love for the deceived Raulin,—urged me to an ac-

tion which all must approve who can judge of the nature of my wrongs. I drew it before he could possibly prevent me; and, striking it into his side, "Take, villain," I cried, the reward of your infamy, and the only proof of my attachment. Will you now, my husband, credit this wretch's horrid report." Alas! my trembling hand lost its strength. The duke started back, and the dagger went aslant, so as merely to graze the skin. He seized my arm. "You justify," he exclaimed, "every attempt I can make to lower your pride. Come, even this mock endeavour to exonerate yourself is useless. I am not hurt, nor did you intend I should be so." I looked upon my husband. His countenance still retained marks of incredible credulity

dulity and fuspicion, and, turning to Streou, "I fee," he faid, "through her ineffectual arts. Lead me then where I may never again witnefs fuch deep fineffe;" and, tearing himfelf from my weak endeavours to detain him, he rufhed out of the room, leaving me overwhelmed with anguifh.

"The duke ftaid no longer than to add to his crimes by an unanfwered torrent of unmanly exultation, nor from that hour till you firft graced the palace with your prefence did he appear before me without adding to my mifery by dark myfterious fpeeches refpecting the deftination of my unhappy hufband. My time now wore heavily away in unavailing complaints or melancholy inattention; or, when the full

sense of injury returned upon a disturbed brain, I would call for the savage who had betrayed me, who had poisoned the mind of my hero and torn his bosom with anguish, depriving him even of the consolation of knowing he was beloved, to lighten the chains of his captivity.

“ Alas, how often have I thought he was sacrificed to the Christians God, for I knew not then his attribute was mercy. I knew not then that no human victim was offered up on his holy altar, nor could I imagine that a professor of a religion accounted so pure could be permitted to run a career so dreadful, or that, if he were at all influenced by an Almighty power, whose characteristic was benevolent, he could
be

be permitted to laugh at my affecting remonstrances, and turn with hardened cruelty away from the indignant expressions of justly excited resentment.

“ For about two months after this addition to my woes, I was strictly confined, nor suffered, with the knowledge of those who were placed about me, to leave my apartments, though my imagination was eternally on the rack to find the prison of my husband. Algarva, who was permitted to remain with me, and was not so sedulously watched, continually attempted to discover what I was so anxious to know, and, entering at the close of day, informed me, while almost breathless with transport, she had discovered a private door, behind the hangings of

the antichamber, which communicated to a suite of rooms on the other side of the palace. My heart palpitated with the hope of succeeding in a search so consequential, but it was impossible to take a lamp to guide us. However, the stars gave some little assistance through the small grated windows, though the thickness of the walls through which they are cut prevented our receiving much help from those luminaries. As soon as the guards had quitted the gallery, where they attended during the day, we sallied forth, stepping lightly and fearfully through several rooms which conducted us to the opposite wing of the building, where a large and heavy door seemed to prevent our farther progress. It was fastened on our side by two massy bars.

bars. With much difficulty we lifted up those iron impediments, and they fell down with a hideous crash, echoing through the palace.

“ I could scarcely breathe through my excessive agitation, for I doubted not but the noise would alarm our gaolers ; but, after listening some moments, and finding all quiet, we ventured to explore a long and dark passage that lay before us. After creeping a few paces in utter darkness, we found this narrow gallery turn short to the left, and perceived at the end of it a glimmering light. Gathering courage from this, we proceeded onwards till we found ourselves stopped by an iron grating, which reached to the ceiling ; nor could we advance any fur-

ther, though it hindered not in some measure the gratification of my painful curiosity; for, at the end of this dreary passage, we perceived a small room. The door was open. The clanking of a heavy chain made me start. I gazed, trembled, gasped for utterance, and grasped Algarva's arm. "See you not," I cried, "see you not that affecting object?"—Ah! lady, upon some straw was extended, pale and emaciated, the gallant Rau-
lin, his face turned towards the dim winking lamp, a book in one hand, the other held over his eyes, as if to shade the weakened orbs. Was it in nature to support this affecting scene in silence? I shrieked,—called upon the dear captive,—execrated his venge-
ful tyrant,—clasped the bars,—struck
my

my face against them with a violence that forced the blood in torrents from my nose. The poor victim raised himself up with apparent pain, and in a hollow tone asked who it was that disturbed the only moment he could call his own. "It is your wife," I cried; "your faithful suffering Gunilda! She is innocent, Raulin, she is guiltless of every fault but that of blind inconsiderate affection. Speak to me. Eight long weeks have I been uncertain of thy fate." — He interrupted me. "Why then didst thou betray me? Ah! Gunilda, my life wastes in lonely agony. None enters this dreary abode but the servant appointed to bring my scanty provision." He then advanced two steps, and stopping suddenly, I heard the cruel iron

that held him drop heavily upon the floor. "I can come no nearer," said he, and, taking up the chain, dashed it against the ground again in a paroxysm of fury, and, falling upon the straw, wept aloud.

"My anguish now rose to madness. My feelings were terrible. "It is I,—Raulin, it is me, who is the cause of this barbarous treatment. I am your persecutor, I am your murderer!" — Algarva entreated me to consider the situation we were in. "Have patience, madam," she said. "Now we know the way, we can come again tomorrow night. Perhaps I may be able to visit my lord some time in the day, and there may be a possibility of inventing some means for his escape."

I listened with rapture : a blessed hope lulled my agonized senses. " Yes, my love, (I cried,) Gunilda will strive to repair the error she has committed by studying how to free you from those galling chains"————" You will be more lucky than you have hitherto been to do that," interrupted a voice that deprived me almost of life. " Your plots are better laid than performed. You are too noisy in the execution of them." Alas ! it was too plain the falling of the bars had discovered us to the villainous duke. I cast a mournful look upon my husband. He was in an actual frenzy, endeavouring with his teeth to tear asunder the links which held him. It was but a momentary view I had of the shocking scene.—My guards, who attended the duke,

forced me from the grate, and I could hear Raulin shrieking with vehemence, "Bring my wife! Gunilda, leave not thy imprisoned husband. Return, return, and cheer me with thy presence——"

"I can add no more of this sad description. My senses were totally overcome for a long period; and, when I was so far recovered as to ask for Algarva, was informed by my nurses she had incurred the fate of her countrymen. "Then," I cried, "she is happy. Oh that Gunilda were so too!" In answer to my enquiries for my husband, they replied, "He is removed to London, and the duke is also gone thither." This I could not believe, till I was permitted to visit the room
in

in which he was confined, and likewise to examine every other apartment; so that I had then no doubt but he was sacrificed to that monster's unjust insatiable revenge. Since that sad event, I was indulged with more liberty than before, and could wander about the environs of that delightful place almost unattended.

“ My usual employment was a repetition, either upon my harp or lute, of that little simple sonnet which discovered me to my husband; and often at nightfall, regardless of the chilling dew or cold east wind, would sit for hours opposite the cavern that once sheltered the poor harper. The room, too, where he was confined, was no longer shut from my visits; whole days

days have I lingered in the gloomy apartment. Even a few links of the chain which was left behind became precious to my sight, because I fancied he had dropped a tear upon them; and, tho' they had contributed to his misery, I could not but look upon them as sacred relics left to remind me they once confined the noble and warlike limbs of my hero. Often have I been amazed at that strength of constitution which had not given way to such a variety of afflictions, and, though my face bears indubitable marks of the ravages grief has made, yet I have a certain presentiment that sorrows still more violent wait but the ordination of a mysterious Providence (to which I submit) to shatter and utterly destroy this mortal frame.——

“ But

"But I will now hasten to repeat the strange occurrence that brought me hither under the protection of the noble Guiderius. You wonder to hear of Guiderius. I will immediately explain the mystery.

"Deprived of that repose so essential to the renovation of the mental and bodily faculties, (by perplexing and fearful visions,) I gladly arose with the morning sun, and, leaving my little ones locked in the arms of sleep, summoned the warder to open the gates. He readily complied with my request. A heavy fog descended like rain, but it prevented not the excursion I meditated. Turning towards the wood with an intention of seeking
the

the path in which I first beheld you, I was interrupted by confused and sudden shouts, that seemed, from the information of my ear, to be at no great distance. Though the thickness of the atmosphere prevented any assistance from sight, notwithstanding on a clear day the prospect is unbounded. I stood hesitating, and undetermined whether to proceed or return to the palace, when the appearance of a war-chariot left no time for doubt, and I ran with the utmost speed towards a home which circumstances had rendered hateful; but I was immediately overtaken by the object of my fears, who hastily descended from the vehicle, and approached with respect. — You already guess the benevolent Guiderius stood before me. I trembled

bled with a mixture of pain and uncertain hope ; but, before I could articulate a syllable of my feelings, he said, "Fly, thou persecuted matron, fly, or destruction will appear in the most terrible aspect. Disguised, and sinking my name in that of Morcar, I have performed wonders for my king, and have been intrusted with the most important commissions. Success has made my peace. I have now discovered myself to king Ethelred : he is pleased with my conduct. Even Mercia is outwardly reconciled, though I know a rancorous revenge boils at his heart, which a favorable opportunity will call into action. After many attempts to rout your countrymen, a scheme is formed which leaves no doubt of victory ; but, suspecting our design,

design, and that the duke of Mercia is the contriver, a strong party have formed the resolution to destroy him in his palace. This I discovered by an unforeseen accident, and hastened hither to put him on his guard, as well as (if possible) to reclaim you from his power, as I have no doubt but the treachery the Danes are now in the practice of will prove fatal to you and yours if left to his vindictive resentment; for, though flushed with a desire of conquest, I cannot forget my friend, and in your protection will perform the sacred vow I made your oppressed consort. Come, then, yonder trees, that cover a space of ground so large, will doubtless afford an asylum till the dark night shall prove favorable to your further escape." He stopped.

stopped. Ah!" said I, "know you not yonder walls contain my defenceless little ones? I will not leave them to a tyrant's rage."—

"My deliverer started, looked towards the palace, and without speaking jumped up into his chariot, seized the reins, and was out of sight in a moment. O madam, what a trial! I had put my children in the power of a man who, notwithstanding the rectitude of his character, the promises he had made my husband, and his candid offer of assistance, was yet a professed enemy of my nation. I wept, —I cast myself on the ground,—I invoked the gods of my forefathers for want of a knowledge of a supreme Deity, and was ready to start into temporary

temporary madness. My agitation increased with the approaching storm, while my feet were impelled to the spot that contained my treasure. Still the clangor of warlike music, the hollow sound of battle-axes upon the heavy armour, the rushing of chariots, the clashing of swords, and the neighing of steeds, convinced me of my danger; but, while my eyes were straining in pursuit of their beloved objects, I beheld them led by their gallant preserver. The chariot was left behind. I was breathless with joy. He took my hand, saying, "This is the very minute of preservation. Avail yourself of it. I have no time for further particulars: — your husband lives! Let that intelligence accelerate your flight."

Oh,

"Oh, how my heart throbbed in silent thankfulness! I could not speak, but in that trying instant thought of Elfrida and her peaceful recess. Pointing therefore to the path, he took the hint, and we immediately descended the hill. Guiderius (no longer Morcar) expressed unfeigned delight when I directed my hasty steps towards St. Frideswald.

"The rest you know, — and Oh that the God of your pure adoration may reward all who have been instrumental so far to our escape."

"Alas! thought Elfrida, much do I dread the Deity, whose greatness you so justly acknowledge, has yet
more

more poignant trials for his votary. O that it were given in mercy to me to confirm thy deliverance ! But who can alter the decrees of heaven ? We can only suffer in silent submission, only tremble and adore.

Exhausted by the length and affecting subject of her narrative, Athela sunk faint and languid upon her couch. The remembrance of past woes and the apprehension of future misfortune, passing in rapid succession through her mind, presented nothing but images of death and desolation, and she was impressed with the most painful sensations. Elfrida applied with sedulous attention to calm the tumult of her soul. The Danish lady received her gentle endeavours with gratitude, and
promised

promised she would try to forget in necessary repose every foreboding fear and every past grief.

Pleased with this resolution, the princess left her, and with the infant Danes sought her own room, where she gave way to a thousand melancholy ideas; the most predominant was the fear of Athela's discovery, for well she was acquainted with the superior's disposition.

While, lulled in transient repose, the pious inhabitants of St. Frideswald passed a short hour of rest, their turbulent visitor could enjoy no such serene blessing; for now the pangs of impetuous love (if we do not prophane the sacred affection by assigning it a residence

residence so ungentle) added their force to those induced by more stormy passions; and, though Elfrida's hand was his promised reward for wading through oceans of human blood, yet her reception plainly evinced her views and wishes to be totally inimical to his,—and to be defeated in the dearest purpose of his heart by a woman called up every indignant incitement to revenge; nor was his Danish prisoners' flight at all conducive to the gratification of his sanguine intentions. Another cause too prevented the triumph of inexorable resentment and mortified pride. Guiderius, whose destruction he had long meditated, shone superior to him even in the manœuvres of battle, and though conquest followed his steps, and could not be secured without necessary

necessary severity, yet was justice so
 sweetly attempered with mercy, that
 it seemed more the infliction of a be-
 nevolent power than the savage cru-
 elty of a barbarous enemy, and ap-
 peared to militate against the resolu-
 tion taken by the British king, who,
 secretly prompted by Streou, and ur-
 ged by the complaints of his suffering
 subjects, gave unlimited orders to spare
 neither age nor sex, and, as far as the
 duke could possibly obey orders ac-
 cording with his own base principles,
 those orders had been enforced ;—but
 Guiderius, who fought like a man,
 fought only to engage with men, and
 left the harmless female and feeble
 ancient to lift up a trembling hand
 and weeping eye of gratitude to that
 humanity which spared their helpless,

ness for more vigorous and guilty prey.

Another reflection united now to prove how ineffectual the most complete success is in partial performances to secure general satisfaction ; Raufin, whom he had sent under a strict guard to London, was yet in being. The decisive blow was not given. Fond to gratify the warrior on whose valor so much depended, Ethelred, in compliance with Guiderius's earnest petition, had spared a life which even Streou's power could not then touch ; and the duke in this indulgence beheld a tacit superiority over himself, who hitherto had known no competitor in his royal master's favor. Each of these causes then, singly considered, was enough

rough to irritate his haughty soul to meditate a shocking revenge; but, thus blended, they acted with most dreadful impetuosity upon his feelings, nor could fail to produce every effect disappointed love, cruelty, and ambition might promote. How then to enforce the operation of his lawless will in every point was next to be decided. Alas! he knew not then that, to make his condemnation the greater, and for the punishment of a heathen race whose crimes called for exemplary vengeance, an omniscient Power permitted the completion of his infernal purposes;—he knew not that the innocent were to suffer a temporary punishment for the guilty, and that the sacrifices he offered to his vindictive rage were sanctified by a glorious Protector

terior, who suffered the apparent injustice that his greatness, in the confusion of those instruments of divine vengeance might be magnified, and his power more fully acknowledged.

Perplexed with a contrariety of those schemes that rolled through his agitated brain for the effecting his diabolical intentions, sleep had no power to calm or lull him into a moment's forgetfulness, and the bell for midnight vespers roused him from a couch which vice had strewed with thorns, while the gentle objects of his perturbed thoughts enjoyed a respite from sorrow, and every care, every hope, every fear was suspended; but the solemn summons to prayers interrupted the tranquil rest that had closed their eyes,
and

and Elfrida, rising with alacrity, pursued her steps to the chapel, where she was immediately joined by her revered friend, who, awakened with the sisters passing her door, gladly accorded to the rules of a house distinguished by the most pious attention, and where nothing but real indisposition could excuse the nuns from prompt obedience.

The princess shuddered, and in a moment saw that danger the unconscious Athela could not dread, for well she knew this lady's bitterest enemy was in an apartment on the other side the monastery; and, though the strictness of their order permitted not a man to enter their walls, yet the quality and absolute power of Edrie Streou surmounted even the dread of eccle-

fiastical censure, and she knew not but even the chapel itself might be polluted with the presence of one so violent.

How to avoid a consequence so direful she could nor tell. To urge the necessity of her absence would imply a doubt of danger; even the hint of Edrie's proximity would be to terrify almost to madness her fearful mind; and, should the abbess even consent to her concealment, terror might bring about a discovery so fatal. However, in such an exigence, something must be done. The solemnity was begun,—the clear response and tuneful organ had already enchanted Athela with their harmonious concord. In a devout extacy she bent before the altar, her eyes swimming in tears of holy rapture,

ture, her hands elevated to the crucifix, which, though rudely portrayed, engaged her most grateful notice. — Thus she remained, inattentive to the signs and whispers of her anxious friend, who, turning suddenly about on hearing a little bustle at the lower end of the chapel, beheld the duke receiving that adoration so proudly exacted, though so little his due. Elfrida lost all recollection at this sight, and sunk motionless against the rails.

The abbess, who expected great advantages from an acknowledgement of the quality of her guest, was extremely disconcerted to think accident should effect that which she intended to make known in her own time and way; and, though determined on the

ruin of the unhappy Dane, chose to endeavour at that instant to preserve her, as she should not only gratify her young boarder, but conciliate her confidence even beyond the period she had fixed for the disclosure of the secret.

The duke advanced up the aisle, while Algitha, covering her real intentions with the pretence of recovering the princess, drew both the ladies from the altar before Edrie could get near enough to ruin her project. A side-door in the chantry favoured their retreat ; and, when Athela was made to understand the destruction she had escaped, tears, prostration, exclamations of gratitude, and expressions of the most agonizing fears marked her reception of the superior's good offices,

ces, while the princess embraced Algitha's knees, vowing never to forsake a woman who had thus generously succoured the distress of an injured lady, and preserved her to her infant family.

The abbess received the sacrifice of an undesigning heart in silence, and with a mysterious air withdrew from the sympathizing friends, who felt not so well satisfied with this subsequent conduct, which, in their estimation, implied a sort of repentance for the precipitate kindness induced by a sudden though fallacious emanation of compassion. While the poor ladies were giving way to a thousand conjectures respecting this event, stillness again presided over the inmates of this

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mansion.

mansion. Accustomed to such interruption, sleep soon regained its power over the nuns' senses, when the worship they so cheerfully offered was concluded; but the early day, which soon after appeared, found the anxious friends in a conversation that tended not to remove the sad impressions of fear from Athela's mind. They occupied an apartment which looked into a narrow lane, on the east side of St. Frideswald. It descended with sudden precipitation, and by a short turn was covered by thick hedges from an extensive view.

While they were talking, Athela fixed her eyes upon this almost subterraneous descent, and interrupting herself, while her looks were bent upon the

the spot, "Oh!" she cried, "that this lane did but lead to some secure asylum. A hermit's cell, a peasant's cot, a cavern in the rock, even a hole in the earth, would hold out inestimable charms, could they but secure me and mine from that formidable monster." She stopped. "Alas," answered Elfrida, "you, who have been used to the delicacies of life, — to the royal palace, the sumptuous table, variety of attendants, and every care necessary to keep off chilling cold or insupportable heat, — could you, even if such a place offered itself, — could you endure solitude, damp, and it may be even the visits of incurfivè ravagers, againft whose violence innocence and helpiefs diftrefs would prove a feeble oppofition, or rather (it may be) an

incentive to the most opprobrious acts."

To this representation the terrified matron offered no reply, as melancholy conviction carried its forcible effects to her heart. She sighed and wept, but again contemplated a wish of exploring the unknown path, while a possibility of escaping the threatened evil impressed a beam of consolation upon her darkened mind. At last, encouraged by the silence of her meditating friend, she ventured upon another hint in favor of this wild project. The affecting earnestness which distinguished her voice and action convinced Elfrida how little the sense of distant danger operates upon a soul intent to fly the mischief nearest in perspective,

tive, and she no longer objected to the proposed scheme.

After numberless arrangements rejected almost as soon as mentioned, it was settled to leave the children in Elfrida's protection, as they both rightly judged they were but secondary objects of Mercia's fury, and that their infantine situation might induce the superior's compassion in their behalf. The sun was now risen, and darted its beams into the intended asylum, which lessened in some degree the horrors of its appearance, while that bright luminary cheered the poor wanderer's sinking spirits, though it furnished an obvious reason for her speedy departure. Therefore, with a kind of desperate resolution, she turned

ed toward the couch of her sleeping babes, and, kneeling with hands outstretched, over-shadowing as it were her unconscious offspring, pronounced a solemn ejaculation, firm, uninterrupted, and replete with pious resignation; and, throwing a light disguise over her night-apparel, she caught Elfrida's arm, without casting another look to the bed, and they softly descended by a private flight of steps to a door that opened into the lane.

Here then Athela stopped a moment. The declivity was rugged and abrupt. Long grass grew between certain stones which had fallen from the rocks on each side, and intercepted a small stream that run along the bottom of the valley, so that it required
some

some caution to pick out a dry path. The prospect was unpropitious, but there was no time for further delay. She lifted up an agonizing eye to the countenance of her weeping friend, kissed her hands, gathered the cloke close about her, and quitted the lovely virgin, who solemnly invoked the holy Mary to witness her endeavours to serve and save the deserted little ones, while Winefred witnessed in tears the affecting separation with a noisy expression of grief, for which she received a gentle check from her mistress, who, after waiting to see the last of this unfortunate lady, cautiously drew the heavy ill-formed bolts, and quietly ascended to an apartment now become lonely and uncomfortable from the want of that society so painfully endeared

endeared by friendship, sympathy, and suffering, and sunk into a stupor induced by grief and pity.

It was not long before the mattingbell alarmed her senses, and she began to revolve in her mind the necessity of accounting in a plausible manner for Athela's absence. Of all the various schemes a ready but pure imagination suggested, none offered that carried a plausibility of success, and she left her attendant, after a thousand precautions, to pay the morning sacrifice of a devout and sensible heart, and implore the assistance of the Deity she so humbly worshipped. This service, acceptably performed, relieved the oppression of her mind, and, in proportion to the confidence she imbibed,

her

her courage increased. Even Edrie's awful appearance as she entered the conservatory failed to create the usual sensations, and she rejected his reiterated offers to convey her to London with a modest firmness, which roused his anger to a pitch dangerous to those who attended him ; nor did the abbess escape his tyrannical censure, though a consciousness of the important service she was about to render him lessened the fury of the storm to which she meekly bowed.

Elfrida, happy to find her secret was yet withheld, bore the effects of unrestrained anger with patience, and heard with joy the necessity he was under of leaving the monastery to pursue a conquest so far advanced, and so likely

likely to be monopolized by Guidarius, whose amazing genius for war was rewarded with the highest success.— This intelligence was brought by a courier, and increased the rancour burning in Mercia's bosom against the gallant warrior and his adherents. Even the Danes, for whom he experienced the most implacable hatred, became objects of indifference, since, on their extinction, he could not build his own glory, but was on the point of seeing it destroyed by a fellow soldier.

Making then to the parlour appropriated only to Algitha's use, and whether she had retired as a retreat from his anger, he renewed his exclamations and vows of revenge, charging his ancient vassal with using some sinister

nister act to detain the princess, and denouncing destruction to the abbess and her house if she devised not some means to secure his interest with Elfrida.

This was the moment Algitha had long wished. All the advantage unlimited power could procure seemed absolutely within her grasp. She was well acquainted with Athela's influence over the princess, nor doubted but a promise of concealment would induce that lady to remit her haughty severity to the duke, to whom, if Elfrida remained obstinate, she meant to discover the unhappy Danes. Thus resolved, she promised obedience, and was going to execute her commission, when a lay-sister, in whom she placed great

great confidence, informed her Elfrida was engaged in earnest conversation with the courier, who requested an audience of that lady when he had unfolded his business to the duke. —

“Engaged with a courier!” repeated the suspicious nobleman. “What a debasement! He comes not from Ethelred. Through me only can she receive intelligence from court. He comes from the army. I must develop this mystery. — Saw you his face, Alghitha?” “No, mighty lord; he concealed it I thought with particular care. — Concealed, aye, it was concealed from me too, but wherefore he must explain.” The abbess was again disconcerted; but, determined at any rate not to lose the credit of a first discovery, begged his patience while she unfolded

unfolded an affair of real consequence.

He was in the attitude of suspense, one hand upon the door, as ready to leave the room, the other grasping his half-drawn sword, "Speak, woman," he cried; "trifle not with me."—"Your enemies, my lord, your prisoners,—the countess and ~~her~~ children are——" "Escaped,—I know it."—"Not so, my lord. Hear but your ancient servant." "Speak then, or death shall stop your babbling tongue; but I know what you would say,—they are fled, and through your detestable contrivance:—ha! is it not so?"—This unfortunate misconstruction of her secret, added to a strong impression of fear and a hesitating accent, which

which his formidable countenance increased, deprived Algitha of her meditated triumph, and she fell on her knees in speechless vexation, pointing to the princess's apartment.

With a vindictive look Edrie glanced his eye over the disappointed superior, and, commanding the lay-sister to lead the way, he hastened to be convinced of what he yet dreaded to discover, and, bursting into Elfrida's closet, beheld the courier seated upon a couch, and engaged in earnest conversation with the object of Streou's impetuous affection, who was supporting one lovely infant Dane upon her knee, while two others were playing at her feet.

The

The stranger started in apparent confusion, and seemed solicitous to hide his face from the duke, in whose aspect malignant pleasure, mortified hope, and black revenge, contended for a sole monopoly. He darted forwards with an intent of sacrificing the subject of his malevolent passion, for one glance was sufficient to inform him that the disguise he had assumed was for some important purpose. But here his self-confidence lost its dependance. It was not the crouching slave, turning an opened bosom to his vengeful fury; — it was not a trembling suppliant bending for the mercy his callous heart never encouraged; — it was not a cowardly or conquered enemy that stood before him, — but a gallant equal, a victorious Briton, the man whose death

— he

ardently desired, whose destruction he had secretly vowed, and who now with matchless strength wrested the weapon from him with one hand, while the other dashed him with violence to the ground.

What a scene was this for the gentle Elfrida ! whose sentiments accorded not with the ferocious spirit of the times, when worth was estimated by the strength of its possessor, and he who could boast the greatest share of personal valour was deemed the noblest among the noble, and he who could wield the heaviest club or draw the strongest bow stood foremost in the favor of his country. Her terrified imagination foreboded nothing less than the destruction of those tender

der

der babes, who, affrighted by the sudden attack, flew to her palpitating bosom for protection. Rising therefore with trembling haste, she caught the furious Guiderius's arm as he was about to pursue his conquest, and intreated him to have some respect for her presence, and not pollute her apartment with blood. The moment of suspense which this request occasioned was favorable to the duke, who arose breathless with vexation and his fall; but, encouraged by the appearance of several soldiers, which the ladies had hastily alarmed, he pointed to his antagonist, whose dauntless courage was not to be foiled by numbers; but the combat was too unequal, and with inexpressible rage he beheld himself disarmed, forced from

the princess, and, while indignation swelled his great heart, beheld Athela's dearest treasures once again in Edrie's possession, who commanded them to be conveyed to his palace, while he determined to make the strictest search through the convent for their unfortunate mother, and before he left Elfri-da, cautioned her (notwithstanding his intention to obtain her love) to make no future assignation, without taking more effectual methods to prevent a discovery. Disdaining to answer sarcasms so low, she hurried from him, while her sorrow for the capture of the poor innocents deluged her eyes with tears, and a secret prevailing sympathy made her view, as she conceived, for the last time, with increasing grief,

the

the generous friend who had hazarded every thing for an interview, so hastily acceded to, and so fatally interrupted.

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